Manitoba
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REPORT NUMBER 2

TO EVANGELIZE THE NATIONS:
ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSIONS IN MANITOBA 1818 - 1870

by

Martha McCarthy

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By
Martha McCarthy
1990

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Abstract

This book presents a general overview of Roman Catholic missionary activity within the boundaries of what is now Manitoba from 1818 until 1870, identifying the causes which led to the foundation and development of the Church in the west. The establishment of eight individual mission stations is detailed, with the unique circumstances of each linked to the more general character of all Roman Catholic missions in the west.

The author analyzes the complex relationship of the Church with the Native peoples - the Métis, Cree, Sauteux (Ojibwa), and Chipewyan - and links this to the contemporary influences of the Hudson's Bay Company and Church Missionary Society on the Roman Catholic mission enterprise. Education as an integral component of mission theory is considered. The challenges faced by the bishops in supplying, from their limited revenues, sufficient clergy, nuns, and schools to pursue the expansion of the Church, are also taken into account.

Lack of time and space, added to the necessarily heavy reliance on missionary documents, have prevented the author from an extensive analysis of Native reaction to the Catholic teaching or from consideration of the effects on Native culture of imported European Christianity. It is hoped that future historians will remedy this deficiency.

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Abbreviations used in notes

AASB = Archives de l'Archevêché de Saint-Boniface

AD = Archives Deschâtelets, Ottawa

CMS = Church Missionary Society

HBCA = Hudson's Bay Company Archives

LCSB = Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface

Lettres = Bulletin de la Société Historique de Saint-Boniface, Lettres de Monseigneur Joseph-Norbert Provencher, Premier Evêque de Saint-Boniface, Vol. III (1913)

NAC = National Archives of Canada

PAA = Provincial Archives of Alberta

PAM = Provincial Archives of Manitoba

RMQ = Rapport des Missions du Diocèse de Québec

SHSB = Société Historique de Saint-Boniface

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Catholic Missions in Manitoba 1818-70

During the French régime in Canada, the Catholic Church sent its priests, in company with fur traders, explorers, and military garrisons, to act as missionaries to the Native peoples. They also served the religious needs of the French stationed in the territories claimed by New France - an area which stretched west to the Rockies and south to the mouth of the Mississippi River. In this way the Church reached the farthest corners of New France, maintaining contact with its French members and seeking to incorporate all the Indian nations into its fold. Its missions maintained this dual character, bringing religious services to Catholics, while at the same time preaching the Gospel to those who had never before encountered Christianity.

Most of these missionary priests were members of the Jesuit order and their names, given to lakes, rivers and streets, survive as testimony to their presence throughout the western interior of New France. Only a few reached what is now Manitoba. A priest was stationed for short periods of time at Fort Bourbon (York Factory) during the period of French occupation from 1693 to 1713. Père Coquart spent the years 1742 to 1744 at La Vérendrye's Fort la Reine (Portage la Prairie) and in 1750 Père Mornie spent the winter there.[1] A priest also spent a short time at Fort Dauphin.

These priests had some contact with the Native people of Manitoba and with the Métis offspring of the French fur traders and Native women. Theirs was the first Catholic missionary influence in present Manitoba. Although the brief period of time involved meant that the religion preached probably had little lasting effect, more than fifty years later, some still remembered the prayers in the French language which had been taught to them.[2] Native oral tradition had combined with the Jesuit teaching to preserve at least some enduring legacy of these early western missions of New France.

The priests of New France had a more prolonged contact with the French, Indians and Métis of the Upper Great Lakes, the progenitors of many of the nineteenth-century Red River Métis. After the Cession of New France in 1763, however, priests did not visit the Upper Great Lakes for many years. Within the structure of the Catholic Church the whole of British North America was attached to the diocese of Quebec; the Bishop of Quebec was responsible for providing priests throughout this vast area. After the British took New France, they decreed that no more French priests would be allowed into the colony of Quebec; an exception was made for a few émigré priests during the French Revolution. The Bishop of Quebec was left dependent on the French-Canadian population to supply priests for his diocese. Although the birth-rate in French Canada was high and the proportion of boys eager to become priests was large, these priests were fully occupied in the St. Lawrence region and areas immediately adjacent to it. They continued some of the early mission works of New France in such Indian reserves as Caughnawaga, along with their more usual function as curés of parishes, but their number was insufficient to continue the extension of the Church into the North West.

Yet the Métis descendants of the traders and explorers who lived and worked in the Upper Great Lakes, known as the North West during the eighteenth-century fur trade, preserved some knowledge of the Catholic faith, which they passed on to their children. The blackrobes of this folk-memory became well-known to many who had never had contact with priests.

When this region was lost to the United States of America after 1783, the Montreal fur traders were excluded. The far west and north claimed by the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) then assumed a new importance. This became the North West for the British North American fur trade of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was here that the North West Company (NWC) contested the monopoly claims of the HBC. Their competition offered economic opportunities which drew the Métis of the Upper Great Lakes to Red River. As these people moved to the Prairies, so too did their faith and the customs of the Catholic Church, insofar as they had preserved them.

After the War of 1812, the Bishop of Quebec found himself in a somewhat more stable position and could begin to think of expanding the Church into the North West. His supply of priests had increased. Moreover, his status with the British government was high because of his support for the government during the war, when Roman Catholic French-Canadians had proved to be as loyal to the British Crown as Protestant English-Canadians. This led to more official recognition of the position of the Roman Catholic Church and more willingness to accept its expansion in British North America.

By then Lord Selkirk had begun his small colony at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. Selkirk arranged for a Catholic priest to accompany the settlers in 1811 to serve the few Catholics. This priest, however, never reached the Red River Settlement. He returned to Europe after spending the winter of 1811-12 with the colonists at York Factory. The Catholics of Selkirk's colony, like the Protestants, were left without clergy.

Establishment of First Mission at Red River

Selkirk had felt it his duty, as founder of the colony, to bring out a priest for his Catholic settlers, but the provision of a priest for the Catholic French-Canadians and Métis already living in the vicinity of Red River was the responsibility of the Bishop of Quebec, Joseph-Octave Plessis. Many of the Métis employees of the NWC were nominally Catholic, but were among those who had not been contacted by a Catholic priest since before the fall of New France. The HBC and the NWC were then engaged in the last desperate struggle for control of the fur trade, a conflict much embittered by the colonization at Red River. Both sides attempted to use the Bishop to further their aims; in his turn, Plessis looked for the best way to expand his Church into the West.

When Angus Shaw of the NWC visited the Bishop on his way to England in 1814, Plessis told him that he planned to visit Grand Portage and Rainy Lake the following year to minister to the voyageurs and Catholic engagés when they gathered there for the summer rendezvous. Anxious to further this project, Shaw offered Plessis transport in the NWC canoes. Some

large farms were already in operation around Rainy Lake and the NWC wanted to encourage a settlement to help provide food for its canoe brigades and posts. The presence of priests would increase the project's stability and make it more attractive to the Métis servants as a place to settle.[3] Plessis was unable to make this trip as planned but hoped to send priests as soon as possible.

Miles Macdonell, former Governor of the Red River Settlement, also drew Plessis' attention to the religious needs of that colony. In his troubles with the NWC in 1814, he had sought the support of the approximately 200 Canadian freemen with Native wives and children who lived along the Red River, by promising them free seed and land in the colony. He recognized the difficulty of winning these people to an agricultural life, however, and told Selkirk that "A good priest that spoke french would make a fine harvest among them & be the means of bringing them quickly to a regular mode of living."[4]

When Lord Selkirk heard that Plessis intended to send priests to the NWC posts, he countered with a pressing invitation to establish a permanent mission at Red River. He was "fully convinced of the infinite good which a zealous, intelligent ecclesiastic might effect among these people, among them the sense of religion is now almost entirely lost."[5]

Technically, Selkirk's colony was independent of either the HBC or the NWC, but the links between it and the HBC were so close that its separate status was almost indistinguishable. Selkirk suggested that Plessis could serve the interests of both fur trade companies by having priests stationed at Red River; from there they could visit the NWC posts at Rainy Lake and Fort William. This would preserve the impartiality of the Church vis-à-vis the two companies. At the same time, the presence of a church and priests at Red River would improve Selkirk's colony, and bring the influence of the priests to bear on the freemen or "vagabond Canadians",[6] unattached to either company.

Plessis was faced with a difficult choice. To accept either invitation wholeheartedly would mean involving himself and his Church in the trade war, a position extremely detrimental to the Church. Anxious to avoid the appearance of partisanship, he sent one of his priests, Mr.

Tabeau,[7] to assess the situation in the West the following year and report back on the best site for a Catholic mission. In fact, however, the Bishop seemed to have been convinced by Selkirk's arguments. He told Tabeau to choose a site in the Red River Settlement in as central a location as possible, from which the priests could visit Rainy Lake and Fort William as Selkirk had suggested. The priest was to establish a stable mission only at Red River; there could be nothing at Rainy Lake and Grand Portage except an annual mission or a mission by a priest passing through.[8] Deterred from going farther by the news of the Seven Oaks battle between the Métis and the colonists, Tabeau only went as far as Rainy Lake in 1816. In truth, Tabeau was vehemently opposed to the whole Red River project and so disinclined to go there that Plessis accused him of bias in favour of the NWC.

Despite these complications, the Bishop persisted in his intention to establish a mission at Red River, a decision which naturally upset the NWC. He was encouraged by the reception of a petition from the Métis colonists of Red River, including Jacques Hamelin, Louis Nolin, several other freemen, and some of the De Meurons soldiers. They asked the Bishop to send them a priest, insisting that the Métis were a peaceful people who had been misled by others at Seven Oaks. The petitioners suggested that the presence of Catholic priests would ensure peace within the colony.[9] Selkirk's agent, convinced of the benefits to the Red River Settlement which would follow from priestly influence over the Métis, had some influence in the dispatch of this petition. No bishop could ignore such a request; it was incumbent on Plessis to respond if at all possible.

As a further incentive to begin a Catholic mission in his colony, Selkirk granted the Church a generous amount of land extending along the east bank of the Red River. This grant was contingent on the establishment of the Catholic mission on this property rather than at the NWC post of Rainy Lake. All of these factors contributed to Plessis' decision. Finally, the Governor of Quebec, Lord Sherbrooke, anxious to ensure peace in the North West, strongly supported the formation of this Catholic mission.

In 1818, Plessis sent two of his priests - Joseph-Norbert Provencher

and Sévère Dumoulin - and a seminarian, William Edge, to begin the establishment of the Catholic Church within Lord Selkirk's colony at Red River. A subscription in Quebec raised funds to provide a chapel and a house for the new mission.[10] The missionaries travelled west in the canoes of the HBC, accompanied by Captain Lorimier of the Indian Department, whose presence indicated both government support of the project and its independence of either fur-trade company.[11] Several French-Canadian families planning to settle at Red River, plus some carpenters, brickmakers, and labourers engaged for varying periods of time, were also part of the brigade.

At the same time, two other priests - Tabeau and Crevier -travelled to Rainy Lake in the NWC canoes to spend part of the summer. In 1819 Tabeau repeated this journey. That was the last trip made under the auspices of the NWC, since the amalgamation of the two companies in 1821 ended the precarious balancing act required of the Church during the period of competition.

Aims and Methods: Plessis' Instructions

Plessis gave detailed instructions to Provencher and Dumoulin before they set out for the North West. He stated categorically that the first object of the mission was to draw the Indian nations of this vast country "out of barbarism and the disorders which result from it."[12] The second object was to look after the French-Canadians and Métis Christians who had adopted the customs of the Indians and lived "licentiously and forgetful of their duties as Christians".[13] Thus the two priests were to minister to almost all of the population of the West - Indian, French-Canadian and Métis - in a resumption of the earlier missions of New France. With this work laid out for them, Selkirk could assume that the priests would have neither the time nor the inclination to interfere with the Protestants of Red River.

Plessis explained the methods he thought the two priests must follow to spread the Catholic religion to these non-Christian Indians and uninstructed French and Métis peoples. He stressed that the single best way to Christianize the populace was simply by preaching the Gospel. The

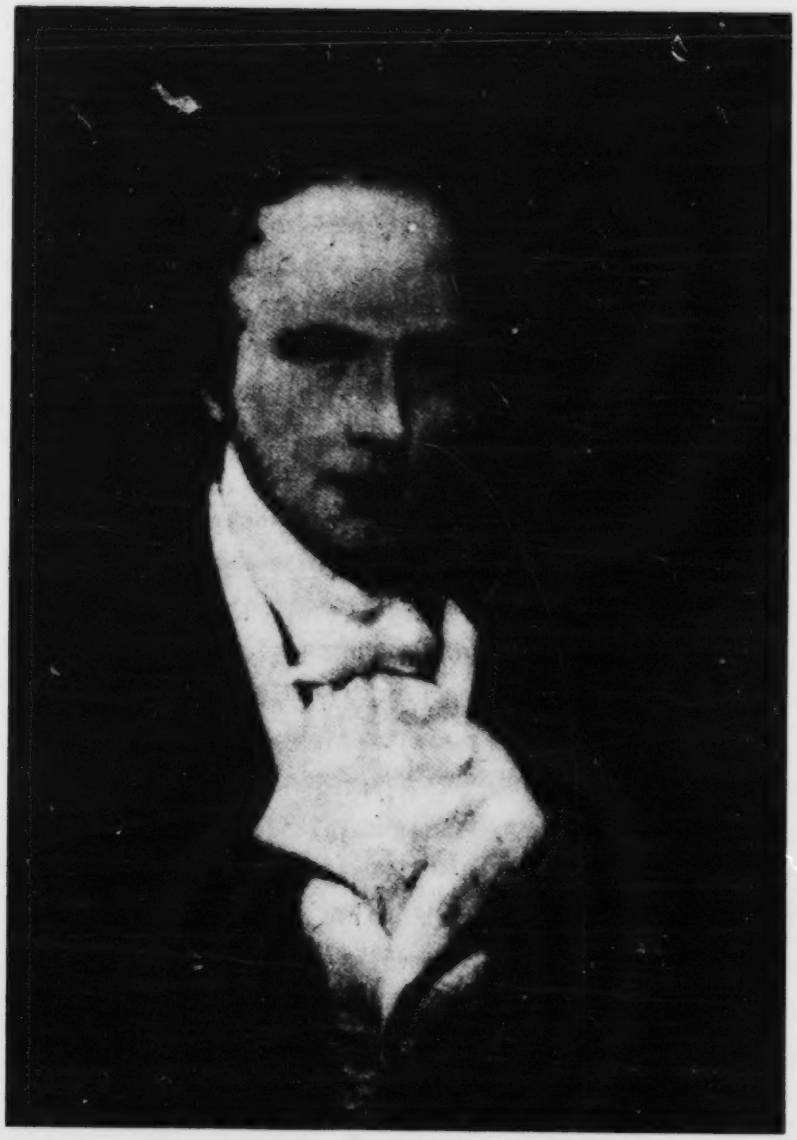

Fig. 1 Thomas Douglas, Earl of Selkirk

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missionaries would first have to learn the Native languages and prepare dictionaries to help other missionaries. This approach did not envisage a basic cultural change in the native people as a prerequisite to evangelization. It conceived that the Gospel would be readily accepted by them if preached in their own language. The different code of behaviour and the Western European cultural aspects which accompanied that Gospel would, however, have effects unforeseen by the simple instruction to "Go forth and teach the Gospel to all nations".

The priests were to concentrate first on instructing and baptizing the Native wives of French and Métis Catholics, so that these couples could then regularize their marriages within the Church. Although the Church recognized the validity of "country marriages", these couples were expected to receive the blessing of the Church when priests were available. In cases of polygamy, the loss of one family was the necessary consequence of the insistence on monogamy. Many were unable to face that unhappy choice.

Plessis also told the priests to begin schools and teach catechism classes to bring up the children in the Catholic faith. Evangelization should be pursued first and foremost through the families, bringing the mothers and children firmly into the Church to form the secure foundation on which all future missionary efforts would be based. These mission methods, with the emphasis on a change in marriage customs, family life, and the education of children made the seeds of cultural change, enforced by the missionaries, most evident.

The two priests were also told to plant crosses in all strategic sites as a sign of possession by the Catholics. This practice probably derived from the example of the early explorers and missionaries of New France, although it was a custom very prominent in the contemporary home missions of France as well. The Church rights to any locations were, however, subject to the authority of the Crown exercised through the HBC. The missionaries were reminded to encourage obedience to the laws of the state as well as those of the Church and to pay all the recognition due to the lawful sovereign. In an area subject to government by a chartered commercial company, this would be translated into encouragement of paying

debts and adherence to the code of behaviour necessary in the fur trade. The peculiar circumstances of a mission at Red River, in the last days of the struggle between the HBC and NWC, led Plessis to warn his missionaries to maintain a balance between the two contending parties. This was complicated by his instruction to build a church, house, school and farm near Fort Douglas, the headquarters of Selkirk's Settlement, which was bound to be interpreted by the NWC as a bias in favour of the HBC.

Plessis asked the priests to write frequent reports to him on the progress of this new mission. This close supervision of missionaries by the bishop was characteristic of the nineteenth-century Church, in contrast to the seventeenth-century foreign missions, when priests in isolated regions often operated independently of any control by their religious superiors. The increasing ultramontanism and centralization within the Church left little room for individual initiative in the mission fields of the nineteenth century. The uniformity and direction which were demanded by these policies were only made possible by the new communication methods of that century.

Plessis' instructions represent the state of Catholic thought on Indian missions in the very early nineteenth century. These ideas derived in large part from the experience of New France, with the emphasis on teaching the faith in the Native languages as the primary goal of missions, and with no recognized demand for cultural alterations other than the acceptance of Catholicism. But the inculcation of the Gospel and the teaching of the Catholic faith itself represented a drastic cultural change. This would necessarily lead to the establishment of Catholic moral standards, most evident in the demand for monogamous marriages, the avoidance of intemperance, and attendance at religious services; these alone would require much adaptation on the part of the Native people. The aspects of civic morality were also to be encouraged. The very real cultural changes demanded simply by the acceptance of Catholicism by the Native people, and the concomitant effects of the missionary enforcement of Catholic religious customs and morality, were considered by the priests to be beneficial, if noted at all.

The stress on education as an essential component of mission work,

more important in the nineteenth-century theory of missions than in the seventeenth, held in it the seeds of deep-rooted cultural changes. The attempts at schooling the Indians of New France had all failed, however, and the results of prolonged mission education could not be foreseen. Plessis' instruction to provide schools for the Natives was for many years an expression of conventional wisdom rather than a practical mission policy.

Another aspect of the missionary outlook of the Jesuits of New France which recurred in the nineteenth-century North West missions was the belief that the development of a devout native Catholicism could only be properly accomplished in isolation from the pernicious influence of Europeans and Canadians. As earlier missionaries had discovered, Provencher noted that contact had not "civilized" the Natives but had made them more "uncivilized", because of the vices of liquor and libertinage introduced to them. Segregation from contact with Euro-Canadians other than the missionary was often regarded as the only way to preserve the Native converts in the purity of their new faith.

As yet no conscious link was made between evangelization and "civilization", in the sense of enforcing a change to agricultural life as a necessary prerequisite to the teaching of the Gospel. After the destruction of the sedentary agricultural Hurons in 1649, the Jesuits of New France had adopted new mission methods, following the northern hunting tribes to their centres of trade and visiting them in their camps around the Great Lakes. Plessis could see no reason why this once-successful method should not be continued in the somewhat different circumstances of the far West. Provencher, however, was not long in recognising the difficulties of the task imposed on him. Soon after his arrival at Red River he realized that it would be very difficult to "civilize and instruct"[14] the vast number of Indian nations, scattered here and there across a huge area, with no fixed residence throughout the year. True civilization in Provencher's mind was the acceptance of the faith, rather than a change to a settled agricultural life. Still, he recognized that the mode of life of the hunting tribes of the North West made evangelization of them more difficult. Thus, although the Catholic Church did not stress the

need for a change in the life of the hunting tribes, it did recognize that an agricultural life was an asset, by enabling frequent and prolonged contact between missionary and neophytes.

Early Development of Catholic Mission at Red River

Whether or not it was necessary to impose upon Native Peoples the European concept of civilization at the same time as Christianization was, in fact, theoretical for many years. The two priests sent by Plessis were fully occupied with the needs of the French-Canadians and Métis of Red River and had little time to try to evangelize the Native tribes.

Provencher chose a site on the east bank of the Red River within the grant made by Selkirk and devoted himself to building a house-chapel. Early in 1819 he travelled by dog team to posts on the Qu'Appelle River, spending his time primarily with the servants of the fur trade, rather than with the Indians. Provencher returned to Quebec in 1820, where he was consecrated Bishop of Juliopolis in charge of the whole North West, subject to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Quebec. Consequently, he had little time even to begin the mission in Red River, let alone to extend his efforts to the Native tribes beyond it. It was 1822 before Bishop Provencher returned to Red River.

Dumoulin spent most of his time with the Métis at Pembina, a spot vital to the buffalo hunt which maintained both the colony and the fur trade. The agricultural resources of the settlement were too meagre and too subject to natural disasters to provide a reliable subsistence. Instead, the buffalo hunt was the "breadbasket" of Rupert's Land and the Métis were the provisioners. It was natural for the priests to attempt to work with the Métis where they lived at Pembina rather than to encourage them to a change to agriculture, which might prove disastrous to their own well-being and to that of the settlement.

By the time the NWC merged with the HBC in 1821, the missionaries had spent three years in teaching the Catholic faith and practice to the Métis of Pembina and Red River. According to Provencher, they had done more to colonize the settlement in those few years than Selkirk had been able to do in the six years before their arrival. Their presence had drawn many

of the fur-trade people to settle at Red River, something which Provencher thought they would not otherwise have done.[15] Selkirk's agent, Robert Dickson, had concentrated a great deal of effort on persuading the people of Sault Ste. Marie, Pointe Ignace, Mackinac, Green Bay and even Prairie du Chien, to move to Red River "to get quit of American imposition".[16] The presence of a Catholic mission was a considerable asset to Dickson's argument and may have been the deciding factor for those who did move.

The population of Métis at Red River increased considerably after the union of the companies when the new HBC economized by discharging the excess servants acquired from the merger. These men were encouraged to bring their families and settle at Red River. Many were Catholics and naturally settled near the mission, now called St. Boniface, and took up lots spreading south along the banks of the Red River. The first years of adjustment to the settlement were very difficult ones for these people, especially for those with large families, and they required a great deal of assistance from the charity funds of the Company.[17] They were in no position as yet to offer financial support to the Church.

The mission at Pembina in some ways overshadowed that of St. Boniface. A church and priest's house were built there, while the rectory at St. Boniface was left unfinished. These labours were jeopardized, however, by the decision that the forty-ninth parallel should be the boundary between the United States and British North America in the prairies. Although it had been included within the original grant of land to Selkirk by the HBC, Pembina became part of the United States.

John Halkett, Selkirk's brother-in-law and executor of his estate, visited Red River in 1822 and, in a sharp letter to Plessis, criticized the fact that Catholic missions had been located at both Pembina and Red River. According to him, the Catholics ought never to have built at Pembina while they had no completed buildings at Red River, nor schools nor farms on the extensive grant of land given them by Selkirk. Their concern for Pembina, Halkett claimed, had helped to keep the Métis dispersed, instead of concentrated at Red River. It had also encouraged

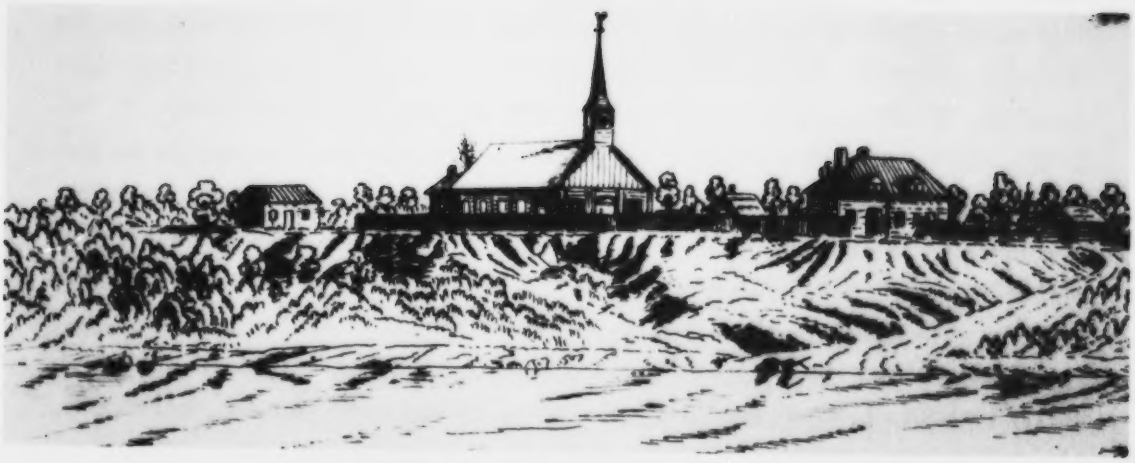


Fig. 2 St. Boniface Cathedral (1823)
from a sketch by William Kempt
PAM N10736

the Métis "to continue in their idle and disorderly mode of life"[18] - a common European misconception of the buffalo hunters' way of life. Halkett insisted that the Catholic mission remove from Pembina and encourage the Métis to follow them back to Red River.

Accordingly, Plessis directed Provencher to concentrate on the education of the young and the cultivation of his land at Red River. Otherwise, the Catholic mission risked losing the support of the HBC which was so essential to its continued existence now that Selkirk had died. Provencher had no choice but to accept this directive. The mission to the Métis at Pembina, the focus of so much of the first efforts of the Catholic priests, had to be abandoned.

Many of the Métis, however, refused to follow the priests to Red River. They continued to hunt the buffalo in summer and winter on the plains or in the parkland. These Métis became known as the hivernants or winterers. They made only brief appearances in the Red River Settlement to trade their meat and pemmican and attend to their religious duties.

Those Métis who left Pembina in 1823-24 with the intention of taking up land north of the border did not settle at Red River but at White Horse Plains, on the Assiniboine River, west of the settlement. This was a move instigated by the new governor of the Company, George Simpson. He arranged with Cuthbert Grant, the renowned Métis leader, to take up land there and use his influence with his friends and relatives to form a village, which became known as Grantown. This would also serve as a western outpost and defence of Red River.[19] Since Grant had recently become a Catholic and a very devout one, and all the Métis who settled at White Horse Plains were Catholics, Provencher transferred the mission of St. François Xavier there from Pembina. (See Chapter Two)

First Missions to the Sauteux

Until 1833, the Catholic Church missions in the North West consisted only of the buffalo hunt missions and the two establishments at St. Boniface and St. François Xavier. Each served French-Canadians and Métis rather than Indians. Primarily because of the shortage of priests willing to

spend years in the west, the evangelization of the Native peoples had never really been attempted, though it was the stated primary purpose of sending priests to the west in 1818. Provencher depended on Lower Canada to supply him with priests, since his various attempts to secure indigenous vocations all ended in failure. In the first years of Catholic presence in St. Boniface, he never had more than four priests at any one time, and at times had only one or two. In the 1820s, none stayed long enough to learn the Native languages necessary to begin the evangelization of the Indians. Although Provencher complained constantly of their lack of dedication, he had little choice but to send them back to Quebec when they requested it.

In 1831, when Provencher went to Quebec to raise funds for a new stone cathedral in St. Boniface, he tried to persuade more priests to come to his aid. He intended to assign one of these priests to Indian mission work to begin the long-delayed process of evangelization of the Natives of the Red River area. His fund-raising activities were more successful than his search for priests. Only one priest, Mr. Georges Belcourt, committed himself to work for Provencher. For the next two years, Belcourt studied the Sauteux language, while he assisted Provencher at St. Boniface. In 1833 he was ready to establish a Sauteux mission on the Assiniboine River west of St. François Xavier. He named it St. Paul des Sauteux, usually referred to as Baie St. Paul. (See Chapter Three).

Buffalo Hunt Missions

Although the Métis took up land at White Horse Plains, built houses, and sowed crops, their economy still depended primarily on the buffalo hunt. They continued to leave their houses and farms to pursue the buffalo in the summer and fall. The summer hunt, which lasted from about the twentieth of June to the first of August, was the larger of the two. Entire families lived on the plains in large camps. The fall hunt, much smaller, began about the twentieth of September and continued to the first of November.

As the buffalo moved farther away from Red River, the Métis began to intrude on lands claimed by the Dakota. This inflamed the hereditary

antagonism between the two. The dangers of this situation made the Métis buffalo hunt resemble a military expedition, despite the presence of families and priests. This strength was not always enough to deter attacks and, as in all wars, devastation of the countryside was a significant weapon. In 1844, after a battle in which lives were lost on both sides, the Dakota fired the prairies, forcing the buffalo beyond the reach of the Métis. Since two-thirds of the population of Red River still depended on the Plains hunt for their subsistence during the long winter, the effects on the settlement were very serious. Half the people were starving by December.[20]

Belcourt accompanied the fall hunt in 1845. That year it was only about one-third the normal size because many of the Métis, unable to live in the settlement over the winter, had gone to the lakes and woods to live by hunting and trapping. In all, the hunt numbered 309 people. They had to avoid the area around Turtle Mountain and the Souris River because the winterers were camped there. The hunt moved on to Devil's Lake, the Cheyenne River and as far as the Grand Coteau of the Missouri River, finishing in mid-October, with 1776 buffalo killed by 55 hunters. According to Belcourt, the Métis attributed the success of this fall hunt to the presence of the priest. During the hunt, Belcourt catechised 68 children and said Mass every day for the families.[21]

In 1846 Belcourt accompanied the summer hunt. His presence was especially valuable then, because the people suffered severely from an epidemic of dysentery, which was made more serious because it followed the measles. The effects were disastrous; three or four people died each day. Belcourt visited the sick, tried to heal them, and baptized the dying - a combination of physical and spiritual healing which was characteristic of most nineteenth-century missionaries.

Near the Grand Coteau of the Missouri, Belcourt visited the fort in the country of the Gros Ventres to obtain medicine for the sick. He used this occasion to preach to the Gros Ventres and Mandans, who had joined together after decimation by smallpox in 1836 and formed a village of about 133 lodges.[22] In mission work like this, the Catholic priests spread their influence far beyond the confines of Red River, and made some

contact with Métis and Indians who lived on the Plains. At the same time they maintained their relationship with their usual parishioners, through months of prolonged contact and shared dangers.

Despite the risks and the years of starvation, the hunt continued to occupy the Métis. In 1849 when Père Tissot accompanied the summer hunt, it consisted of 1500 people, including 200 Sauteux, with 700 carts, 1000 horses, and 400 dogs. Tissot claimed that the population growth at Red River, combined with the decimation of the buffalo, forced the Métis to go farther away in their hunt. That year, they travelled approximately 400 to 500 kms, which brought them into Dakota lands. During the eight-day battle which ensued, six of the Sauteux were killed or wounded.[23]

By 1850, the hunt was split into two groups - one from White Horse Plains and the other a combined force from Red River and Pembina. The group from White Horse Plains was much smaller, composed that year of 120 hunters and 340 carts. Some of the Dakota were killed that summer by the Sauteux, and in reprisal two Métis were attacked.[24]

The Dakota, who had first asked the American agent to keep the Métis away from their lands, were told to defend themselves. Consequently they spent the winter organizing war parties and sending tobacco to their allies, inviting them to participate. Unaware of this, the hunters left White Horse Plains on June 15, 1851 accompanied by their priest, Mr. Louis Richer Laflèche, and joined the Red River-Pembina group on the Pembina River on the nineteenth. A few days later, they divided into two camps, as usual. The smaller White Horse Plains group, which intended to hunt in Dakota lands, consisted of only 67 hunters; the other camp had 318. Laflèche hoped that this small detachment might obtain its load of meat more quickly than a larger one could, and thus retreat from Dakota land before any attack could occur. But when they reached the Grand Côteau of the Missouri on the 12th of July, they sighted a very large Yankton Dakota camp, and three Métis scouts were taken prisoner. The Métis fortified their encircled carts and prepared for attack. During that night, they were impressed by an eclipse of the moon, which Laflèche had predicted. The priest fully expected to die the next day, for the Yankton, with 600 lodges, could supply at least 2,000 warriors. Nevertheless, he exhorted

his followers to trust in Providence and ministered to their religious needs. After many hours of battle, the Métis and Sauteux managed to hold off the attackers and returned safely to White Horse Plains.[25]

In 1852, the Dakota threat was so serious that Taché, returning to Red River from his consecration in France, had to avoid the prairie trail between St. Paul and Red River and take the much more difficult woods trail. The Dakota also harassed Belcourt's flock at Pembina that year.[26] Three years later, the Dakota attacked the Red River hunt camp of 400 men and killed six, as well as taking 200 horses, and pillaging the camp. Again the road between St. Paul and Red River was very dangerous.[27] Thus the buffalo hunt could never be regarded as a simple hunting expedition, but always presented the possibility of warfare.

The priests, however, perceived the real danger of the buffalo hunt as the immorality which might occur in the large camps, free of the strictures of settlement life. Whenever possible, one of them accompanied the hunt to reinforce Catholic moral standards and to instruct the children. For many of the hunters this was the only time they saw a priest. The linguistic skills of some of the priests were of considerable advantage to them in these buffalo hunt missions. The Métis preferred to hear Belcourt preach in Sauteux, which they understood better than French.[28]

Missionary Methods to 1870

At first Provencher was delighted by Belcourt's zeal and commitment, but the two men were soon at odds over the proper way to evangelize the Sauteux. Belcourt was convinced that the Sauteux must live in a settled village before they could be instructed in the Catholic faith. He insisted on building a combination chapel and school-house, laid out a village, began a farm, gave out seeds, and encouraged the Sauteux to establish farms near him. Belcourt maintained that only a radical cultural adaptation to an agricultural way of life would prepare the Sauteux to receive the word of God.

This effort by Belcourt proved a very expensive undertaking to Provencher, who had a horror of going into debt. He was often accused of

Fig. 3 Mgr. Joseph-Norbert Provencher

PAM

perhaps taken on his trip to France in 1843-44

being stingy, especially by Belcourt, an accusation not without some foundation in fact. More important to Provencher, however, was his conviction that Belcourt's methods were faulty and would never bear much fruit. Provencher asserted that evangelization could be pursued without any preliminary changes in the way of life of the Sauteux. He reiterated Plessis' earlier instructions, that the sole duty of the missionary was to evangelize. The priest should follow the Indians on their rounds, visit them when they gathered in larger numbers to trade or fish, preach to them at these sites and instruct them in the faith. No alteration in the culture of the Sauteux was required before they could become Christians. Instead, the stress of adaptation lay with the missionary.

The methods advocated by Belcourt on the one hand and by Provencher on the other can be described as sedentary versus itinerant. The sedentary approach was one followed by the Anglicans at Red River in the Indian village of St. Peter's. The idea of a segregated village of natives under the control of a missionary was not new in the nineteenth century. It had been advocated in the seventeenth century by Jesuit missionaries of the Catholic Church in their reductions in Paraguay, the focus of their Spanish-American activity, as well as in Huronia in New France. It was bound to appeal to any missionary because it offered more control of the evangelization process and of the enforcement of Christian morality in the daily life of the new Christians.

Provencher's advocacy of an itinerant missionary approach was based on the special circumstances of the missions in his diocese. Agriculture was not yet really viable as a way of life in the west,[29] even for those long accustomed to it. There was little chance of changing all of the hunting tribes into farmers as a basis for their conversion to Christianity. Nor was it advisable to attempt this, because the well-being of the HBC depended on the furs and provisions supplied by the Indians and Métis. The practicality of Provencher's itinerant missionary approach, which was more adaptable to the actual circumstances and less costly to the bishop, won out over Belcourt's ideology.

In fact, Belcourt himself combined both approaches and often left his sedentary mission station to pursue itinerant missions around Lakes Mani-

toba and Winnipegosis and through Lake Winnipeg to Rainy Lake, initiating the missions of Duck Bay, the south end of Lake Manitoba, and Fort Alexander. (See Chapters Four and Nine.) Catholic missions to the Indians of present Manitoba in the period before 1870 were usually itinerant ones. A priest made irregular visits for a period of a few weeks or months, choosing a time when he would meet a large number of Natives gathered together. Baie St. Paul was an aberration from this norm.

The missions during the buffalo hunt were distinctive of pre-1870 Roman Catholic missionary effort in the West. They were a unique mission, which did not resemble either traditional parish work or the usual itinerant contact with native tribes. They occupied a niche between these two types of Catholic Church activity: that of an itinerant parish or a "mission between" as the Métis were "a people between", neither wholly sedentary nor entirely nomadic. The buffalo hunt missions were one way in which the Church adapted itself to the varying populations with differing economic bases and life-styles in the North West of the nineteenth century. Through these missions, the Church maintained contact year-round with at least some of the Métis, and some relationship with the hivernants, who spent most of the year far from any priest or parish.

Provencher did not advocate itinerant missions in all cases. Most of the missions to the Métis were somewhat sedentary but these were intended to become part of the self-supporting parish structure of the Church rather than to remain as missions. The priests who began these missions did not enforce settlement on the Métis. Instead, they visited already-existing settlements for lengthy periods of time until the population was large enough to justify a resident priest. Even then, this priest would often occupy himself part of the year with itinerant missions to other Métis and to the Sauteux or Cree of the vicinity.

None of the pre-1870 missions of St. Boniface therefore can be considered either entirely sedentary or altogether itinerant; both aspects co-existed to a greater or lesser degree in each mission. The character of each mission was determined by its population and economy. If it had a sufficient number of settlers living year-round, it would become a sedentary mission and then develop into a parish, supported by the local

people, as happened at Ste. Anne des Chênes. If the mission had a number of people resident in the winter but away for the summer hunt, it would have a resident priest in the winter and a buffalo hunt missionary in the summer. Such was the case at St. François Xavier and St. Charles. If the mission was a gathering site for summer or fall fishing, it would receive visits from an itinerant missionary, as did the Lake missions. The Church adapted itself to these various circumstances, rather than forcing a parochial structure on its members. It was a pragmatic approach and a very successful one.

The Oblates and the Missions of St. Boniface

Although the combination of settled parish, buffalo hunt missions, and itinerant missions resulted in a considerable expansion of the Church in the Red River area from 1818 to the 1840s, this was a minuscule part of the task assigned to Provencher. He had been consecrated Bishop of Juliopolis in 1822, auxiliary to the Bishop of Quebec, with responsibility for the whole of the west and north, from Hudson Bay to the Pacific and north to the Arctic. In 1844, however, Rome detached Provencher's area of jurisdiction from that of Quebec and made it a separate Apostolic Vicariate.[30] At the same time, the Columbia region was made an Apostolic Vicariate, independent of both Quebec and St. Boniface. Provencher was named Bishop of Hudson Bay and James Bay, which was soon altered to Bishop of the North West, a title he always detested. In 1851, Provencher managed to convince Rome that he should be called Bishop of St. Boniface.

Provencher's supply of priests from Quebec had never been sufficient to maintain a high level of activity in the St. Boniface region. The few Indian mission efforts of the Catholic Church had been hampered by the priests' lack of knowledge of the language and their unwillingness to stay in the West. With the detachment of his vicariate from Quebec, Provencher feared he would lose even this unreliable source of priests, since Quebec no longer held responsibility for staffing the Church in the far West. Provencher was convinced that the only solution to this unsteady and inadequate supply of priests and to the pressing need for new Indian missions was to ask a religious order of priests to undertake the Indian

missions of his diocese.

The only religious orders on whom he could call were based in France. In 1841, some of these French priests, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, (OMI) had arrived in Montreal at the invitation of Bishop Bourget, and were followed closely by French Jesuits. Bourget had invited them to work in his diocese without asking permission from the British government, which had forbidden the immigration of French priests since 1763. No protest was made against Bourget's action and it set a precedent on which Provencher hoped to rely. He knew, from his experience in beginning the Columbia mission, that Governor Simpson opposed the introduction of foreign priests into HBC territories. Accordingly, Provencher informed Simpson that he intended to try to bring in an order of priests to work within his diocese and he assumed there would be no objection to this action, because there had been none in similar cases in other territories under British rule.[31] Not surprisingly, Simpson reacted strongly and claimed that the situation in Rupert's Land was quite different from that in other British territories, such as Montreal:

> With an imaginary boundary to the South, with the ignorant simplicity of a primitive people, and with the difficulties of superintendence which, notwithstanding yr. lordship's loyalty & firmness & discretion, would render your authority almost as nominal as our own...[32]

He would not, in these circumstances, authorise the introduction of foreign priests into the volatile situation of Red River.

Provencher visited France in 1843 and, despite Simpson's opposition, asked the Jesuits to undertake the Indian missions of his vicariate. The Jesuits were unable to comply. Neither Montreal nor Quebec could spare any more secular priests for St. Boniface. When Provencher returned to Red River in 1844, he learned of the death of Edouard Darveau, one of his most promising young missionaries. His personal grief at this was augmented by the knowledge that the death reduced his clergy still further and made the prospects of expanding the Church's Indian missions more remote than ever.

At last Provencher turned to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate for help.

The Oblates were a very small congregation, which had already sent priests to help Bourget in the home missions of Montreal. Although not involved in Indian missions in Montreal, the Oblates and their founder, Bishop Eugène de Mazenod of Marseilles, were very anxious to become active in this field, which had grasped the romantic imagination and zeal of Catholic France. French clergy dominated the foreign missions of the Catholic Church in the nineteenth century and French lay societies, such as L'Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi, provided the necessary financial support. Their journal, Les Annales de la Propagation de la Foi publicized the missions much as the Jesuit Relations had done in the seventeenth century, influencing people not only to fund the missions, but often to join one of the religious orders active in the mission field. In accepting Provencher's invitation, Mazenod hoped to draw more men to join the Oblates, attracted by the opportunities of involvement in foreign missions. This hope was fulfilled; the missions of Red River marked only the first stage in expansion of the OMI throughout most of the world.

The first two Oblates - Père Aubert and Frère Taché, who was as yet too young to be ordained - arrived in St. Boniface in 1845. By assigning the Indian missions to this religious order, Provencher hoped to use the secular priests from Quebec to maintain those Métis missions already established from St. Boniface. He was very conscious of the fact that he had brought in French clergy in spite of Simpson's opposition and that their presence in Red River itself might antagonize Simpson. He was also convinced that the priests from France would not be as acceptable to the French-Canadians and Métis of Red River as Canadian priests would be. In fact, however, most of the French Oblates spent some time at Red River, where they assisted the bishop in parish and mission activities, with no noticeable lack of acceptance by the Métis and Sauteux nor objections from Simpson.

On their part, the Oblates wanted to become involved in Indian missions and were willing to accept Provencher's direction to concentrate on the northern missions and to follow an itinerant method. In the first years after their arrival, the Sauteux missions begun in the area of present-day Manitoba, including the sedentary mission of St. Paul and the

itinerant missions around the lakes, were abandoned for some years. No missions were ever gladly closed, but these first efforts had proved so futile that Provencher felt compelled to use the priests he had in areas with more hopes of success. The Chipewyan and the allied Dene tribes were found to be much more amenable to the religion preached to them than the Sauteux had ever been. This difference was attributed to the naturally good "dispositions" of the Chipewyan to religion, on the one hand and, on the other, to the destruction of Sauteux morality by their close and prolonged contact with the whites of the settlement. Except for occasional brief visits in the 1850s, the Sauteux of southern Manitoba were not contacted by any priests.

Education and the Church

Education was one of the primary tools of evangelization, but one which required for its success a stable population and a resident teacher. The first Catholic schools were usually begun by the priest, who taught the "three Rs" along with his other mission duties. The prolonged absences of both the children and the missionary decreased the effectiveness of such education.

The seminarian who arrived with Provencher and Dumoulin in 1818, William Edge, taught at Pembina, while Provencher gave classes at St. Boniface. For a time, a layman named Lagassé taught the children of the winterers but this initiative was not pursued.[33] Few of the children could remain for very long at school, and their education suffered from many interruptions while they accompanied their parents to the Plains in search of buffalo.

Provencher was as perennially short of teachers as he was of clergy. As yet, Red River had no nuns to provide the customary type of Catholic education of girls. Provencher tried to persuade Jean-Baptiste Nolin, who had moved to Pembina from Sault Ste. Marie[34] to allow his daughter Angélique to come to St. Boniface to teach, possibly to become a nun. She had been educated in Quebec but also knew the Sauteux language. Her accomplishments would make her an enormous help to Provencher, as he sought to provide education to the Métis and Sauteux of his diocese.

Angélique's father, however, insisted that he needed the girl with him and would not consent to her going to St. Boniface.[35]

By 1825 the two Nolin girls, probably influenced by the closing of the Pembina mission, had decided to move to St. Boniface, where they would teach school, work for the mission, and make cloth and linen. Although the Nolin family did move to St. Boniface, Angélique did not immediately begin teaching but stayed with her father until he died in August 1826. In 1829, she and her sister Margeurite opened the first girls' school in St. Boniface. Later, Angélique taught the Sauteux children at Baie St. Paul from 1835 to 1839.

By 1833 Provencher had begun three schools at St. Boniface, with nearly 100 children enrolled, and one at St. François Xavier with 40 children.[36] This was an expensive undertaking, costing about 1300 francs per year, because the parents were so poor that the Church had to pay almost all of the expenses. In the Bishop's theory of missions to the Métis, schools played a pre-eminent role; he demonstrated his commitment by this allocation from his limited funds.

Provencher had hopes that this education might prepare some of the boys for the priesthood. He began a Latin class for six of these children in 1834.[37] He was convinced that indigenous priests would make better missionaries to the Indians than could priests from Quebec, but none of his efforts to prepare Métis boys for the priesthood were successful. Those who were sent for further education to Montreal or Quebec left before completion of their studies or, in some cases, died there. Why the Protestant churches produced an indigenous clergy and the Catholic Church did not has never been satisfactorily explained. No single cause provides an adequate answer. It appears to have resulted from a combination of the Catholic requirement of celibacy, so alien to Native culture, and the long period of seminary study in a foreign environment, which imposed such a severe strain on those separated from their familiar community.

Fig. 4 Fort Alexander School, n.d.
Archives Deschâtelets, Ottawa

Grey Nuns

In 1843 Provencher asked the Grey Nuns of Montreal to undertake schools in his vicariate. He had tried for some years to find a religious community to give girls "une éducation solide sur la religion et autres branches qui tendent à former pour la suite de bonnes mères de familles - l'industrie, la tenue du ménage, la fabrication d'étoffe, toile, etc."[38]

The Grey Nuns accepted this challenge and proved invaluable auxiliaries to Provencher and his priests. These nuns represented the unique contribution made by women to the nineteenth-century Roman Catholic mission field. This was the era of tremendous expansion of the "good works" of the Church - in education, hospitals, poor relief, and foreign missions - works for which women provided much of the necessary personnel. The Grey Nuns were willing and able to undertake a variety of duties, including teaching, catechizing, visiting the sick and poor, and looking after orphans. This was an ideal combination for Provencher's diocese, one which he hoped would also present a formidable Catholic educational rival to the Anglican schools.

The Grey Nuns began two schools in St. Boniface with from sixty to eighty children. Provencher hoped that the nuns would also be able to restart the school at White Horse Plains. His ambition was to find a school-master to begin a school about one-and-a-half leagues from St. Boniface, probably the later St. Vital, and another about three leagues away, probably the later St. Norbert.[39] These were all Métis settlements. Provencher hoped through these five schools to instruct all the children, if their parents would only cooperate.

The heavy expenses of educating the children of the poor continued to be a drain on the very limited financial resources of the bishop, and a constant source of regret to Provencher and to his successor Taché, especially when they compared them to the resources of the Anglican Church schools.[40] To offset this disadvantage, Provencher encouraged the nuns to begin an English-language school, to which many of the wealthy fur-traders, both Catholic and non-Catholic, sent their daughters. To some extent, their fees subsidized the schools for the poor.[41]

Taché in his turn maintained the commitment to Catholic schools and charged the poorer children a very low board in the belief, as expressed by one of his priests, that "Ce n'est que par l'éducation que nous pourrons en faire un peuple vraiment civilisé, comme aussi vraiment catholique."[42]

Industrial School

The Métis dependence on the buffalo not only kept the children from school and prevented the families from planting crops, it also caused the Métis to rely on the store for imported clothing, obtained in trade for pemmican and meat provisions. The Métis women did not know how to make cloth, a basic housewifely skill in which Provencher believed they should be educated. He persuaded a French-Canadian woman to teach cloth-making to the girls at his school in 1826. This was only a beginning; Provencher intended to sow more flax and encourage others to do the same. With more raw materials, more women could be taught.[43] Both Provencher and HBC Governor George Simpson hoped to make cloth from buffalo wool, but this enterprise failed.

In 1838 Provencher brought two weavers from Quebec to teach the Métis women. The HBC gave them passage and paid their wages, while the bishop was responsible for their room and board. Provencher provided his old chapel for their use and, in a short time, several girls had learned to weave. This school worked well but a fire destroyed the school and machinery in March, 1839. Although the HBC offered to help Provencher rebuild, he was unable to do so.

In the later nineteenth century, the Church did operate several Industrial Schools, including one at St. Boniface. The philosophy of education which lay behind these later developments had been present, at least in embryonic form, in the early initiatives taken by Provencher.

Catholic Schools in 1870

By the time Manitoba entered Confederation in 1870, the Catholic Church had ten schools in existence: two at St. Boniface, plus one each at St. François Xavier, St. Vital, St. Norbert, Lorette, St. Charles, Pointe

Coupée (St. Adolphe), Baie St. Paul, Fort Garry (Winnipeg), and Ste. Anne des Chênes.[44] Other schools had been begun at St. Laurent and Oak Point, although on a somewhat irregular basis. By the end of 1871, aided by funds from the Legislature, the Church added seven more schools, bringing their combined enrolment to 639 children.[45] The mission schools at Lac Caribou, Duck Bay, and Fort Alexander lay outside of the "Postage Stamp Province" of 1870 and were not included in this listing.

The new situation in Manitoba after 1870 necessitated much revision of the educational system. What had been considered adequate for a semi-nomadic people was totally inadequate in the face of the disappearance of the buffalo and the advent of Canadian settlers and government. Where missionaries had provided much of the education before that, new full-time trained teachers were required. The Grey Nuns could not staff all these schools. Instead, they trained lay teachers at the Normal School. Many more orders of nuns arrived in the later nineteenth century to staff the expanding schools of the St. Boniface diocese.

Although government support of religious schools was removed by The Manitoba Schools Act of 1890, ninety-one schools were still regarded as Catholic in 1892 and given special inspection.[46] Very few of these, however, could be regarded as mission schools. The mission schools which continued were based on reserves, and were often residential schools under the control and financing of the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs, though staffed by priests or nuns. The children were brought to live at the school, rather than receiving an education during the periods of their residency in an area, as had been the case before 1870.

Financing the Catholic Missions

It is impossible to give an accurate accounting of the finances of the missions of the Catholic Church in Manitoba. Only a broad outline of the major sources of funding can be ascertained. Lord Selkirk's grant of land was extremely important to the establishment of the mission at Red River. Provencher built his church and house on this land and began a farm, which was essential to the maintenance of himself and his priests. He also gave the Grey Nuns land from this grant, on which they established a farm for

their own support.

Initially, Provencher was unable to sell the surplus land. He rented it for a period of 100 years to those who wanted to live near the mission.[47] Selkirk required that the settlers donate three days work to their church at the beginning of May and another three at the end of September. This displeased the Catholics, mostly Canadiens, who were not accustomed to corvées. In 1824, therefore, an agreement was worked out between Provencher, Governor Simpson of the HBC, and Robert Pelly, Governor of the Selkirk Settlement, whereby the tithe was set the same as in Canada.[48] This was later replaced by voluntary contributions from parishioners.

Secondly, the Archdiocese of Quebec contributed both money and personnel to the mission at Red River. Clergy continued to come from Quebec throughout the nineteenth century to staff the parishes of Red River, although most of the Oblate missionaries came directly from France. The bishops of St. Boniface made many tours of Quebec to raise funds for special projects such as the building and rebuilding of the St. Boniface Cathedral.

The third major source of financing for the missions was a lay society, **L'Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi**, founded in France in 1822. It was dedicated to raising money for Catholic foreign missions, not by soliciting large grants from the rich, but by raising small sums from many donors each month. These sums were administered by a Central Council in Lyons and sent to mission enterprises deemed worthy of support. In this way the nineteenth-century laity could participate actively in the apostolic labours of the Church. Provencher was one of the first bishops of British North America to receive support from this organization and was one of its strongest advocates.

The HBC also gave some financial support to the missions. In addition, the Company usually gave free passages to the priests and nuns, and granted land to the missions and schools established outside of St. Boniface, including those of St. Vital, St. Charles, St. François Xavier, and Baie St. Paul.[49]

Further support came from organizations such as **L'Oeuvre Apostolique**,

which supplied vestments and liturgical needs, **L'Oeuvre de la Sainte--Enfance**, which funded orphanages, and from private donors. For most of the period before 1870, the population of the St. Boniface Diocese was unable to support the works of the Church to any substantial degree. Thus the Church was almost entirely a mission church, dependent on outside financing and personnel.

The Hudson's Bay Company and Missions

In the period between 1818 and 1821, Provencher tried to get along with both the HBC and NWC at Red River. In fact, much of his support derived from the men of the NWC, who had a personal stake in Catholicism, whereas most of the HBC men were bound to it only by the official encouragement given by Selkirk. Even this official patronage was much reduced in impact when Selkirk died in 1820. From then until 1870 the Catholic Church had to work out a modus vivendi with the HBC, the only governmental authority in the North West.

When Provencher returned to Red River from Quebec in 1822, the HBC did not provide for his travel expenses as he had expected. In later years, however, the Company did give free passage to Provencher and his priests, and this reduced his expenses considerably.

Provencher's accommodation to the demands and policy of the HBC in the abandonment of the Pembina mission led to a better working relationship between the Catholic Church and the Company. In 1825, the Council at York voted to donate £50 to Provencher for the support of his mission, as well as giving him a present of wine, sugar, and tea.[50] This donation was re-affirmed annually thereafter. In 1835 the Council raised Provencher's annual allocation to £100 and granted an extra £100 to help him finish his stone church at St. Boniface.[51]

Provencher further endeared himself to the Company in 1826, when he helped to convince the Métis not to attack the Company store. In the summer and fall of 1825 the buffalo had moved beyond reach of the Red River hunters, the crops had almost failed and fish, the last resort for subsistence, also proved scarce. By the spring, three different factions - the Métis, the De Meurons, and the English-speaking mixed-bloods led

by Black McKay - threatened to take what they needed from the Company stores. The Métis were the largest group and the most to be feared. Under the influence of Provencher, his priests, and Cuthbert Grant, they withdrew from the conspiracy and the rest abandoned it. In gratitude, Provencher was given 200 bushels of potatoes from the Company stock to distribute to the poor among the Métis and Canadians.[52]

Although in general the relationship between the Catholic clergy and the Company was a friendly one, each had some grounds, or thought they had, for suspicion of the other. When several old Métis servants of the HBC, who had settled along the Willamette River in Oregon, wrote to Provencher in 1834 and asked him to send priests to instruct their Native wives and offspring,[53] these feelings of mistrust surfaced. The Columbia region was a dependency of the St. Boniface mission and, as its bishop, Provencher was responsible for it. But Governor Simpson of the HBC was also much concerned with events in the Columbia, and sought to avoid any extension of American influence there through missionaries or settlers. He feared the effect of foreign priests such as the Jesuit Père De Smets, and insisted to Provencher that he would accept only Canadian priests. Provencher warned Signay, the Bishop of Quebec, of this fact, asserting that the Church would have to agree because it depended on the cooperation of the Company for any extension of its missions. The Company would be a great help to these priests only so long as they did not meddle in its affairs.[54] Provencher here outlined the careful relationship between the Church and the Company and the requirements he viewed as necessary to keep it operating smoothly.

The Company promised Provencher free passage for Canadian priests to go to these Métis in 1836 but the Bishop was unable to find priests in Quebec who could be ready to take up this offer. When two priests did volunteer in 1837, the HBC refused them passage because the proposed site for their mission, on the Willamette River, would probably become United States territory. Finally, in 1838, the HBC granted passage to the two priests, Mr. Norbert Blanchet and Mr. Joseph Demers, on condition that they set up their mission north of the Columbia River on the Cowlitz River, territory the Company hoped would remain British. This was an

extension of the Church instigated by a request from the Métis and dependent on Provencher's compliance with the requirements of the HBC. It was not an independent move by the Church into the field of Indian missions in the far West.

Protestant versus Catholic Missions

In 1820 the HBC invited the Church Missionary Society (CMS) of the Anglican Church to send a missionary to Red River, his salary to be paid by the Company. Although the population of the colony was a mixture of Catholics and Presbyterians, with very few Anglicans, the CMS minister was to look after the religious needs of the Presbyterians for many years to come. It is possible that the HBC intended that the Anglicans should work only with the English-speaking settlers, while the Catholics would be occupied with the Métis. Instead, both denominations became involved in Indian missions as well, where they competed vigorously with each other within the territory of Assiniboia.

A new dimension was added to this rivalry in the 1840s when both churches sought to extend their missions to the far north. When Provencher asked Governor Simpson for a passage for a priest on the boats to the north in 1838, the governor refused. The Council of the Northern Department decreed that no assistance would be given to either Catholic or Protestant missionaries to extend their works beyond the colony, unless special permission was obtained. This regulation was passed ostensibly because of the Company's fear of missions attracting large crowds of Indians who could become a danger to the fur traders.[55] More to the point, they feared that the Anglicans and Catholics would introduce a fierce level of religious competition among the Native partners of the HBC in the fur trade country, which might prove ruinous to the Company's interests.

In 1839, the HBC invited the British Wesleyans to undertake mission work in Rupert's Land. Governor Simpson apparently hoped that the Methodists would not interfere with the Indian way of life in the fur trade by trying to gather them in agricultural settlements as had the Anglicans.[56] On the other hand, they would not arouse the same suspicion

from the Protestant English Board of the Company as did the French-speaking Roman Catholic clergy. It was hoped that the presence of the Methodists would counter the attempts of both the Anglicans and Catholics to expand within Rupert's Land.

Provencher's missionary priest, Mr. Georges Belcourt, blamed this invitation to the Methodists not on Simpson himself, but on one of the members of the London Committee of the HBC, who was biased against the Catholics.[57] Belcourt also claimed that the Company gave the Catholic priests free passages only as long as they stayed quiet. Once the Church wanted to extend its missions, they would try to position the Protestant English ministers in all the most populated spots, before the Catholics could reach them.[58]

Provencher too noted a change in attitude by the Company. He had asked permission for one of his priests, Mr. Thibault, to begin a mission at Fort des Prairies (Edmonton), but was refused because the Wesleyans were to have a mission there. Governor Simpson informed Provencher that:

> the Governor and Committee do not at present consider it expedient to encourage the visits of Roman Catholic Priests to their posts in the Saskatchewan or to any of their settlements within the Company's territories beyond the precincts of Red River colony.[59]

Provencher blamed this decision on anti-Catholic and anti-French sentiments rampant in the HBC. These opinions had been heightened by the Rebellion of 1837 in Lower Canada and its aftermath, which caused even those far away like Provencher and his clergy to suffer:

> Cette compagnie n'a plus un air de bienvaillance pour nous qui sommes aussi Canadiens, quoique personne ne parle politique. On ne veut que de l'anglais, que du protestant, on suivra ici la marche du Gouvernement.[60]

Provencher's assessment of the situation in 1840 appears to have been an accurate one. Governor Simpson praised the good the Wesleyans were doing, both to the Indians and to the people of the posts they visited. Although he realized that the HBC support for the Wesleyans had roused the

jealousy of the Roman Catholic clergy of Canada, he affirmed that "I conceive as a measure of policy every endeavour should be used to check the Roman Catholic influence".[61]

Provencher was under considerable pressure, however, to expand his missions, with or without the consent of the Company. L'Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi, the lay society which underwrote most of the expenses of Catholic missionary activity in the nineteenth century, would pay more for Provencher's missions if its directors could be assured that he was adding new ones, different from those established in his first twenty years in St. Boniface.[62] This added income would relieve Provencher of some of his dependence on the HBC.

Another pressure was his struggle to precede the Protestants in as many places as possible. In this respect, the Catholic willingness to send priests to visit a number of missions once or twice a year gave them an advantage over the Anglicans, who preferred sedentary missions. The priests had the further economic appeal to the HBC that they were celibates and did not have to convey wives, families and household goods along with them. As the transport system of the HBC became overloaded in the mid-nineteenth century, this became a more important consideration. I n 1840, Provencher received a visit from a Métis named Picher who lived near the foot of the Rocky Mountains. He had come to Red River to guide Simpson through the Rockies on his round-the-world tour of that year.[63] Picher asked Provencher to send a priest to the Cree with whom he lived, because they wanted to hear the priests before deciding to commit themselves to the Methodism preached by John Rundle at Edmonton. Such an opportunity demanded a response from Provencher, and he sent Mr. Thibault to the west in 1842, without seeking authorization or assistance from the HBC. He claimed that the higher authority of a call from God, expressed through Picher's visit, justified his action.

Thibault spent six months on this trip in 1842. The next year he returned to the West, again without HBC authorization, visited Fort Edmonton, and spent the winter in a small hut he built at Frog Lake.[64] In 1844, Provencher decided to make a permanent mission in the West and assigned Thibault and Bourassa to this task. They chose a site on Lac

du Diable, which they renamed Lac Ste. Anne, near Edmonton. By this time Simpson was embroiled in controversy with the Methodist James Evans and, with a new Anglican mission established at the Pas, he could no longer justify his opposition to Catholic expansion. He bowed to the inevitable and, in fact, gave Thibault free passage on the Company boats and provided other help to the mission. Simpson did insist, however, that Thibault must not trade with the Indians except for his own provisions and must also avoid any interference with other denominations. The Governor here expressed the Company's perception that any missionary presence would cause some interference with the fur trade, which should be limited as much as possible. The conflict between the different Christian missions, which represented a very serious threat to the trade, should be averted by the HBC with all the means at its disposal.

But the fur-traders were helpless to prevent missionary expansion. Public opinion in England insisted on the spread of Christianity in British possessions as a foremost necessity, superior to the rights of any chartered business. The London Board of the HBC accepted this reality but preferred as a matter of policy "that the teachings of Protestant and Catholic Missionaries should not be encouraged within the same district, but should be kept as distinct and separate as possible."[65]

Even these efforts by the Company to keep the different branches of Christianity separated from each other in the fur trade country were not always successful. The missionaries of any denomination could always claim that a higher authority demanded their move to an area, even if another mission was already there. Soon the mission frontier matched that of the fur trade.

Catholic Expansion to the Far North

From the Ste. Anne mission, Thibault travelled to Ile à la Crosse in 1845, where he received such a good reception from the Chipewyan that he urged Provencher to concentrate his missionaries in this northern field:

> Occupez-vous, Mgr., de ces mission
> lointaines et nouvelles elles sont

> certainement les plus importantes
> de toutes celles qui se font dans
> notre vicariat Apostolique.[66]

Provencher, motivated not only by Thibault's glowing reports of the prospects of mission work with the Chipewyan but by his own despair at the lack of success in his missions to the Sauteux, accepted this recommendation.[67]

Accordingly, he sent Mr. Laflèche and Père Taché to Ile à la Crosse in 1846. With this move the missions of St. Boniface became dominated by the far north and continued to be so until the 1860s. They expanded rapidly from Ile à la Crosse to the Athabasca and Mackenzie regions of the HBC. One of these early northern missions was that of St. Pierre on Reindeer Lake, initiated by Taché from Ile à la Crosse in 1847, the only one of these far northern missions which was established within the present boundaries of Manitoba.

The beginning of this expansion at Ile à la Crosse received considerable assistance from Simpson. The priests were given free passage on the boats and stayed at the post until their own house was built. This drew accusations from the Protestant ministers that the HBC favoured the Catholics. The Wesleyan missionary, James Evans, told Donald Ross, Chief Factor at Norway House, that he believed that:

> the intentions of the Company were, to establish the Catholic religion in the rich and valuable Districts of the country - and the Protestant, in the poor and exhausted parts of it - for this reason, that the Catholic mode of conversion did not interfere with the successful hunting of the Indians, whilst the Protestant clergy were collecting them in villages, and rendering them useless as hunters.[68]

The attitude of the Company varied with its personnel and with the shifts of public opinion in England. Although the fur-traders in Rupert's Land tended to oppose efforts to convert the Indians to agriculture, in 1850 the London Board asserted that it approved of schools and agriculture for the Indians "for it is worse than useless to attempt to introduce a new system of religion among savages unless it be associated in their

Fig. 5 Mgr. Alexandre-Antonin Taché, 1851

PAM

Probably taken in France at the
time of his consecration as auxiliary bishop

minds with a practical amelioration of their external condition."[69]

The Company continued to express an ambivalent attitude to missions in general and to Catholic missions in particular. Simpson warned that the Chief Factors of the HBC would have to be careful of the expansion of the Catholic Church into their districts:

> where they once obtain a footing they never retreat and every concession they gain merely forms the ground for further demands. Roman Catholic influence is already becoming greater in the Country than is altogether desirable and the Company are disposed to throw the weight of their influence on the side of the Protestant Missionaries. We must, however, keep on good terms with the priests, who might be very mischievous if so disposed...in short they are a dangerous and difficult class to have any dealings with.[70]

The rapid extension of both Roman Catholic and Church of England missions roused the fears of the HBC that the slim resources of the fur trade country might be exhausted. New rules were introduced in 1854 to govern this expansion. The Company insisted that if either denomination wanted to establish a new mission, the bishop would first have to submit the suggestion to Council, stating the locale, the means of subsistence, and the prospects of usefulness. If Council agreed on the utility of this mission, it would then instruct the Officer in Charge to render assistance.[71]

With the imminent review of its Charter and License in 1857, however, the Company could do little to appear to obstruct any mission work in its territories. Its actual direct authority over the expansion of the missions was minimal. But the missions' dependence on the HBC transport network gave the Company a considerable measure of indirect control over the maintenance and subsistence of any denomination. No private mission transport could match the HBC boats for cost and reliability.

Missions in 1870

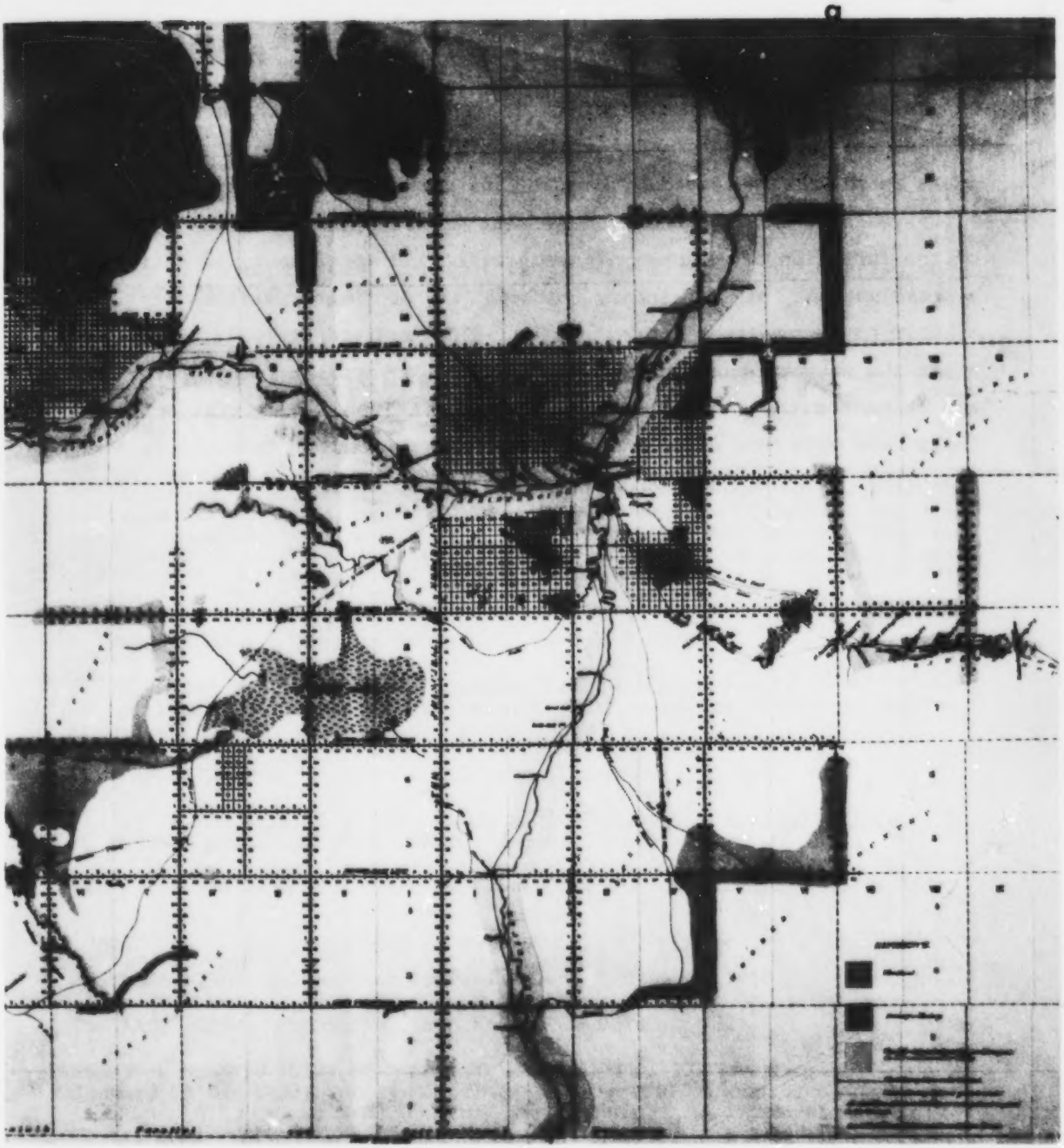
By the late 1850s, Taché, who had succeeded Provencher as Bishop of St. Boniface, had more priests at his disposal and could begin to devote more personnel, time, and money to building up the Church around St. Boniface. In 1863 his responsibilities decreased when the Athabaska-Mackenzie region became a separate vicariate under Bishop Henri Faraud, OMI. This was the area to which most of the efforts of St. Boniface had been devoted since Taché first arrived in 1845, and where most of the Oblate missions had been established. These now became Faraud's responsibility. In 1868 Taché's diocese was further divided. Bishop Grandin ceased to be his auxiliary and became the Bishop of St. Albert, with responsibility for the Plains and also for the most northern Manitoba mission of Lac Caribou. In 1871 Taché was named Archbishop of St. Boniface, with these two Oblate bishops as his suffragans. Thus, much of his early mission territory had come under the care of other bishops.

Taché could concentrate more on the immediate area of St. Boniface, roughly the southern part of Manitoba. He was able to bring out more secular priests from Quebec who, with the Oblates, reactivated some of the earlier missions and began new ones. Most of the missions founded at this time, however, were embryo parishes devoted to the care of the Métis in areas such as St. Charles, St. Vital and Ste. Anne des Chênes. (See Chapters Six, Seven and Eight). Those Sauteux who were contacted were those who lived with or near the Métis settlers, such as at Fort Alexander (See Chapter Nine) or at St. Laurent. (See Chapter Four).

This period also displayed a partial change in missionary methods. The experience of itinerant missions in Manitoba had been disheartening. Taché thought that missions made in passing among the "infidels" were trouble and time lost.[72] He attributed the success of the Anglican missions to their schools, where the Native children were fed and clothed while being taught; this drew the parents to the religion preached as

Fig. 6 Missions and Settlements in Manitoba, 1871
PAM Map Collection

a = St. Boniface
b = St. François Xavier
c = St. Laurent
d = St. Charles
e = St. Vital
f = Ste. Anne
g = Fort Alexander



well. Taché felt unable to do the same because of lack of funding but he did hope to start a model farm to educate the children in agriculture and in different branches of industry.[73]

This reflected a shift in attitudes to mission work, in conformity with social thought of the later nineteenth century, rather than with the ideas which were expressed in Plessis' instructions to Provencher in 1818. Fifty years of experience in the western missions, added to the prospect of the intrusion of large-scale immigration and settlement, necessitated a readjustment of missionary methods in southern Manitoba. This alteration became more evident after 1870, when reserve life began to alter the structure of Native society. When government funding provided the means for the Church to operate residential and industrial schools, these were much more of an instrument of change than had been the earlier sedentary, itinerant and buffalo hunt missions.

Notes Roman Catholic Missions in Manitoba 1818-1870

1. Northwest Review, Anniversary Edition, 1930, p. 72.

2. D.W. Harmon, A Journal of Voyages and Travels in the Interior of North America. (Andover, Mass.: Flagg and Gould, 1820), p. 52.

3. A. D'Eschambault, "La compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson et la Religion", LCSB Vol. XLV, pp. 32-36.

4. PAM MG2A1, Selkirk Papers, #1200. Macdonell to Selkirk, 25 July 1814.

5. Ibid, #2164. Selkirk to Plessis, 4 April 1816.

6. Ibid.

7. For the sake of clarity in distinguishing the origins of the clergy of St. Boniface, I have chosen to keep the nineteenth-century usage of Mr. as title for diocesan (secular) priests and Père for those who belonged to a religious order. Abbé was the title for pastors and was not applicable to missionary priests. These terms were used by both French and English, Protestant and Catholic, until about 1870, when the term "Father" or "Père" came into more general usage for all priests.

8. AASB P1008-9. Plessis to Tabeau, 22 April 1816.

9. PAM MG2A1 #4836. Plessis, Pastoral Letter to colonists of Red River, 26 April 1818 and AASB P1540-44, Requête 1817. (Latter reference courtesy of Diane Payment, Environment Canada Parks).

10. PAM MG2A1 Vol. 13 #4673. Plessis to Selkirk, 16 March 1818.

11. PAM MG2A1 Vol. 14 #4798. Selkirk to Plessis, 16 April 1818, and Vol. 15 #5021. Selkirk to Sherbrooke, 13 June 1818.

12. AASB P1011-14. Plessis to Provencher and Dumoulin, 20 April 1818.

13. Ibid.

14. AASB P2181, Provencher to Plessis, 13 September 1818.

15. AASB P3594, Provencher to Lartigue, 7 October 1821.

16. PAM MG2A1 #5527, R. Dickson to Selkirk, 12 November 1818 and 14 January 1819. Colin Robertson (Ibid, Vol. 15 #5010, Robertson to Selkirk, 11 June 1818) noted that ten of the principal families of Sault Ste. Marie, among them the Nolins, were anxious to settle at Red River.

17. HBCA B235/a/6, fo. 7d, 31 July 1824.

18. As cited in AASB P1265, Plessis to Provencher, 6 April 1823.

19. Margaret McLeod and Wm. Morton, Cuthbert Grant of Grantown: Warden of the Plains of Red River. (McClelland & Stewart, Ltd., Toronto, 1974), p. 86.

20. NAC MG19A40. Richard Lane to W.D. Lane, 31 December 1844.

21. RMQ July 1847, No. 7. Belcourt à Mon Cher Ami, 25 November 1845.

22. Ibid, Belcourt to Bishop of Quebec, 6 August 1846.

23. AD G-LPP 2957, Tissot to Mazenod, 25 May 1850.

24. RMQ March 1853, No. 10, pp. 44-70. Laflèche à mon cher ami, 4 September 1851.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid, Taché to Archbishop of Quebec, 2 July 1852.

27. AD G-LPP 339. Bermond to Faraud, 17 August 1855.

28. RMQ July 1847, No. 7. Belcourt à Mon Cher Ami, 25 November 1845.

29. Cf. C. Herman Sprenger, "The Métis Nation: The Buffalo Hunt vs. Agriculture in the Red River Settlement (Circa 1810-1870)", Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology, Vol. III, No. 1(1972), pp. 159-78.

30. The system of Apostolic Vicars was established by the Church for mission territories in the seventeenth century. The Vicars were bishops, but given title to defunct dioceses in partibus infidelium, such as Juliopolis, until such time as they could be integrated into the regular diocesan structure of the Church and given title to their city of residence (such as St. Boniface).

31. HBCA D5/8, fo. 288-9. Provencher to Simpson, 7 June 1843.

32. HBCA D4/28, fo. 49d-50. Simpson to Provencher, 9 June 1843.

33. Cf. C. Jaenen, "Foundations of Dual Education at Red River, 1811-1834", Transactions, Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, Series III, No. 21 (1965), p. 45.

34. Cf. Jerry Lemay, "Charles Nolin Bourgeois Métis 1837-1907", HRB unpublished paper, 1979. Also D. Chaput, "The 'Misses Nolin' of Red River", The Beaver, Winter 1975, pp. 14-17.

35. LCSB Vol. XII, pp. 230-32. Provencher to Plessis, 13 June 1824 and 15 July 1824 & Provencher to Panet, 18 June 1825. Also LCSB, Vol. XVII, p. 93. Provencher to Lartigue, 24 August 1826.

36. NAC MG17A22 F840 #10937. Provencher to Propagation de la Foi, 10 July 1833.

37. NAC MG17A22 #10938. Provencher, "Notice...", 1 February 1836.

38. AASB P0767. Provencher to Rev. Sr. McMullen, 19 October 1843. "a solid education in religion and the other disciplines which help to form the future good mothers of families - industry, house-keeping, making fabric and cloth, etc."

39. NAC MG17A22 F840 #10948. Provencher to Propagation de la Foi, 4 August 1844.

40. NAC MG17A22 F840 #10938. Provencher, "Notice sur les missions de la Rivière-Rouge", 1 February 1836.

41. Ibid, #10953, Provencher to Propagation de la Foi, 6 August 1850.

42. AD HEC3586 C47 C4. Mestre to Superior of Grand Seminary at Bourg, 5 November 1861. "It is only through education that we will be able to make of them a truly civilized people, as well as truly Catholic."

43. LCSB Vol. XII (1913), p. 258. Provencher to Plessis, 2 February 1826.

44. PAM MG12E1 #2563. J.C. Schultz, Memorandum re Schools from 1860 to 1870, dated 13 January 1893.

45. Report of Superintendent for Catholic Schools, 1871, p. 14.

46. Le Manitoba, 22 March 1893. M.A.L. Young's Report on Inspection of Catholic Schools, 31 December 1892, for Clifford Sifton.

47. LCSB Vol. XII (1913), pp. 230-31. Provencher to Plessis, 13 June 1824.

48. NAC MG17A22 F840 #10938. Provencher, "Notice..." and LCSB Vol. XII (1913), p. 228, Provencher to Plessis, 1 June 1824.

49. Mgr. Taché, Une page de l'histoire des Ecoles de Manitoba, (St. Boniface: Le Manitoba, 1893).

50. NAC MG17A22 F840 #10938. "Notice..."

51. AASB P3694-7, Provencher to Lartigue, 5 June 1835.

52. HBCA B235/a/7, fo. 29-31d, 8 April 1826 to 19 April 1826.

53. NAC MG17A22, Reel F840, #10939, Provencher to M. Choiselet, 1 August 1838.

54. AASB P1111, Provencher to Turgeon, 6 August 1838.

55. AASB Ta3587, Provencher to Cazeau, 24 July 1840.

56. The Methodists were to begin a mission at Norway House in an effort to stop the Indians there from moving to Red River, a move made attractive to them because of the missions there. Cf. Frits Pannekoek, "The Rev. James Evans and the Social Antagonisms of the Fur Trade Society 1840-1846". In Religion and Society in the Prairie West, ed. R. Allen, Canadian Plains Studies #3, Canadian Plains Research Centre, University of Regina, 1974, pp. 1-18.

57. AASB P3329. Belcourt to Cazeau, 21 July 1840.

58. AASB P3306. Belcourt to Cazeau, 22 July 1839.

59. HBCA D4/25, fo. 69. Simpson to Provencher, 17 February 1840.

60. AASB Ta3587. Provencher to Cazeau, 24 July 1840. "This company no longer has a benevolent attitude to us, who are also Canadians, although no one speaks of politics. They only want English and Protestants, they are following in this the course of the government."

61. Simpson to London Committee, 20 June 1841, London Correspondence Inward from Sir George Simpson 1841-42, ed. G. Williams, (Hudson's Bay Record Society Vol. XXIX, London, 1973), p. 24 & 41.

62. AASB P1377. Bishop of Quebec to Provencher, 14 April 1840.

63. Cf. HBCA D5/10, fo. 10b. Rowand to Simpson, 1 January 1844. In this letter Rowand told Simpson of the murder of Piche who had guided Simpson in 1840.

64. RMQ Vol. 6 (1845), p. 72 seq. Thibault to Bishop of Quebec, 18 June 1843.

65. HBCA D5/22, fo. 160-61. Hudson Bay House to Simpson, 21 April 1848.

66. AASB P2740. Thibault to Provencher, 24 July 1845. "Busy yourself, Bishop, with these far-away new missions. They are certainly the most important of all those which exist in our Apostolic Vicariate."

67. Lettres, p. 245. Provencher to Propagation de la Foi, [1846].

68. HBCA D5/12, fo. 176. Donald Ross to Simpson, 15 August 1844.

69. HBCA D5/25, fo. 539. Hudson Bay House to Simpson, 25 March 1850.

70. HBCA D4/43, fo. 63. Simpson to Jas. Anderson (a), 20 April 1851.

71. HBCA D4/48, fo. 46d. Simpson to Taché, 12 June 1854.

72. AASB Ta3522. Taché to Archbishop of Quebec, 13 November 1854.

73. NAC MG17A22, F840, #10950. Taché to Propagation de la Foi, 6 February 1858.

Saint François-Xavier

The mission of Saint François-Xavier, situated on the Assiniboine River approximately 30 kms west of its junction with the Red River, was the earliest and, for many years, the only, extension of the Catholic Church outside of St. Boniface within the present area of Manitoba. It originated in Dumoulin's ministry to the Métis at Pembina, where he built a chapel and priest's house. This was named in honour of St. Francis Xavier, the sixteenth-century Jesuit missionary to the Indies.[1] When Pembina was ascertained to lie within the boundaries of the United States, however, the Catholic mission was forced to move north of the forty-ninth parallel.

In the spring of 1819, Plessis, the Bishop of Quebec, informed Provencher of this fact but the latter was not at first inclined to move the mission, since the Métis still lived at Pembina, the HBC still operated a post there, and the Pembina mission was in a more advanced state than that of St. Boniface. It had a completed workshop; a rectory and a chapel were ready to be built as soon as nails were supplied. Provencher insisted to Plessis that he would have to finish the priest's house to shelter Dumoulin over the winter. He also stated that if the people were determined to stay at Pembina, despite the change to United States sovereignty, he would probably go ahead and build the chapel.[2]

The HBC feared that the presence of a Métis settlement so near to its territories, yet ostensibly under the control of a foreign government, would erode its trade monopoly. In the attempts to economize which followed in the wake of the 1821 merger of the HBC with the NWC, many of the surplus French-Canadian and Métis servants were discharged. Several of these freemen settled at Pembina, where they might very easily become attached to the American traders. They could easily entice their friends and relatives at Red River to trade there also, causing substantial financial loss to the Company. Furthermore, as buffalo hunters in

territories claimed by their traditional enemies the Dakota, the Pembina freemen could draw attacks which might endanger the Red River Settlement.

On his return from Canada in 1822, Provencher, now Bishop of Juliopolis, succumbed to pressure from the HBC and from Halkett, Lord Selkirk's executor, and agreed to close the Pembina mission in the spring of 1823. He doubted, however, that the removal of the mission would convince the Métis to move to Red River and suggested that they would prefer to move to a site on Lake Manitoba which was rich in fish and game.[3]

Both the HBC post and the mission at Pembina were closed in the spring of 1823 and many of the predominantly Métis settlers reluctantly moved north. They camped along the Red River and waited for the hunt to begin. No decision had been made as to where they should live and, in the interim, the Company would not advance them enough to build suitable dwellings.[4]

At this point George Simpson, the new Governor of the HBC, arranged with Cuthbert Grant to create a new Métis settlement on the White Horse Plains of the Assiniboine River, west of the Red River Settlement. Up to this time these Métis had been able to make a good living as provisioners of buffalo meat and pemmican for the fur trade. Simpson expected an increased number of cattle in Red River would destroy the buffalo economy, however, leaving the Métis with no option but to farm. According to Simpson, the Métis could not live by trapping furs as the Indians did, and they could not find employment in the trade except as tripmen, an arduous occupation which could not employ all the men. "Under these circumstances it is necessary to watch and manage them with great care, otherways they may become the most formidable enemy to which the Settlement is exposed."[5]

Grant was related to most of the "principal freemen or halfbreeds",[6] who looked up to him as their chief or headman; he had proved his leadership of the Métis in 1816 at Seven Oaks. For these reasons Simpson was anxious to coopt him to the cause of the HBC. To encourage Grant to his side and provide him with an income, Simpson arranged for him to act as a private trader and freighter for the Company for a year or so. Grant's authority and prestige ensured that many of the Métis would follow

him to take up land at White Horse Plains. Grant's role in forming the settlement was commonly accepted, for it soon became known as Grantown. According to Simpson, about eighty to one hundred Métis families joined Grant to begin agriculture and cattle-rearing and form a well-regulated village, which Simpson hoped would encourage others to leave the Plains.

With the cooperation of Grant assured, Simpson felt equally sure that the Catholic mission would see the advantages of this settlement. Grant had recently married Marie McGillis and converted to Catholicism. Like many converts, he had become very religious and his actions in succeeding years demonstrated his commitment to the Church. He was godfather to many Indian boys and his house served as the priest's residence for many years.

Provencher was quick to recognize that the new site was preferable in many ways. Instead of the permanent mission of Pembina, a priest could easily serve the new mission on the White Horse Plains from St. Boniface. Provencher's perennial shortage of both priests and funds made such an itinerant ministry much more suited to his resources. By 1825, although a few Métis still remained at Pembina, so many had moved that Provencher needed a priest to visit the White Horse Plains. He thought the new settlement would continue to grow, so long as Pembina was not reopened.[7]

At this time Provencher seemed to think that the Métis should take up an agricultural life, rather than continue living from the buffalo hunt. He appeared convinced by Simpson's reasoning that agriculture would soon do away with the dependence on pemmican which made the hunt viable. Nature appeared to buttress this opinion. The winters of 1824-25 and 1825-26 were extremely difficult ones for the buffalo hunters, because the buffalo could not be found in the usual areas. The hunters were starving, forced to eat their horses, dogs, and even their leather clothing. Cuthbert Grant, who had gone to the vicinity of Brandon House as a private trader working in cooperation with the HBC, endured the same conditions before returning to White Horse Plains.[8] The freemen and settlers from Pembina came to Red River in March 1826 to obtain food; they were in such a weak condition that they were only able to make the trip because the HBC sent some Indian corn down for them.[9]

Despite this general misery, the Métis of White Horse Plains refused

to become involved in the conspiracies to rob the Company stores in the spring of 1826. The HBC men attributed this to the authority of Grant, who refused to countenance such a proceeding.[10] Provencher hoped this starvation and the loss of so many horses would force the Métis to cultivate the land. An agricultural life, he thought, would contribute a great deal to improving their morals and overcome the "laziness" of the hunting life.[11]

But White Horse Plains did not immediately become the agricultural settlement envisaged by Simpson or Provencher. The Red River farming settlers too had been close to starvation, with crops in 1824 and 1825 too meagre to feed the population. The great flood of 1826 convinced many to move away from Red River. Those who remained required buffalo meat as a major part of their food base for many more years. Consequently, most of the Métis continued to hunt the buffalo in the summer and fall, earning their living as provisioners to the settlers and the fur trade. Others worked as tripmen for the HBC boat brigades, or as carters for transport from St. Paul and across the plains to Carlton. Those in these occupations also depended on pemmican for much of their subsistence en route, and therefore on the continuation of the buffalo hunt.

By 1850, the White Horse Plains hunt had separated from that of Red River. This may have occurred because of a quarrel between the two groups, but Mr. Laflèche attributed it to the better hunting opportunities for smaller camps.[12] This division into different camps became more vital when the great herds of buffalo receded from the vicinity of Red River and the hunters had to go farther afield. The White Horse Plains group was much smaller in size than that of Red River and hunting the buffalo continued as a major activity for the people of St. François Xavier. Nearby Lane's Post swarmed with hunters, their families, and innumerable carts and horses, preparing to embark on the annual summer buffalo hunt when the Earl of Southesk visited in June, 1859.[13]

A thriving cart-building industry also developed at Grantown, where the making of wheels for the Red River carts became a specialty of François Ridland, Michel Chalifaux and Michel Patenaude.[14] In the 1850s and 1860s, when the HBC began to use carts to send goods overland to

Fig. 7 Métis hunters' camp
Boundary Commission (1872-1874)
PAM

Carlton and the Saskatchewan District, the skills of these cart-builders were even more in demand.

The economic life of the people was based on a variety of seasonal activities and wage labour, most of which required long absences from the small farms of White Horse Plains, whose products were not yet essential to survival. The development from mission to parish depended on the presence of a stable, year-round population, something which St. François Xavier did not at first provide. In the winter, a priest from St. Boniface made extended visits but the settlement was nearly empty in the summer. Contact with the Church was maintained then by the priest who accompanied the buffalo hunt.

In 1822, a young seminarian, Jean Harper, volunteered to come with Provencher on his return from Quebec to Red River. Harper taught in the St. Boniface school until his ordination as a priest in November 1824, after which he devoted much of his time to the Métis of White Horse Plains. He accompanied the buffalo hunters to the Plains in 1824 and again in 1827. Over the Christmas season of 1826 Harper visited Pembina and Grand Forks where a few Catholics, originally attached to the first mission of St. François Xavier at Pembina, still lived. During the winter of 1827-28, he stayed at White Horse Plains catechizing the women and girls, who were unable to make the trip to St. Boniface for instruction, following Plessis' instructions to concentrate first on teaching the Gospel to the women and through them to influence the entire family. In the summer of 1828 Harper visited York Factory. Such enterprise prompted Provencher's statement that "M. Harper est presque toujours en route pour le bien des âmes".[15]

In the fall of 1828, Harper supervised the Métis in building a small combination chapel and school at White Horse Plains, probably on Lot 1437, near Cuthbert Grant's house, which was on Lot 1439 of the HBC Land Register. The small chapel was dedicated to Saint Francis Xavier, as the earlier mission at Pembina had been. This undertaking symbolized the increasing permanency of the mission but did not indicate that it had become a resident mission. In summer, when most of the men were away on the hunt or freighting for the HBC, Harper stayed in St. Boniface, only

making occasional visits to the White Horse Plains to instruct the women and children.[16]

Harper continued this pattern of visits in summer and residence in winter until the summer of 1831, when he informed the Bishop that he wanted to return to Quebec. According to Provencher, the approximately fifty families of White Horse Plains were still in real need of instruction, perhaps because there had been so little continuity in mission and education work. For a time Harper held out the hope to Provencher that his brother Charles would come west in 1832 to teach at St. Boniface, while he and his sister would begin both a boys' school and a girls' school at St. François Xavier. This was a project very dear to Provencher's heart and offered him the opportunity of achieving the dedicated missionary workers he needed.[17] Unfortunately for his plans, none of the Harpers ever appeared at Red River.

Mr. François Boucher, a priest who had also intended to return east, volunteered to remain and take over Harper's ministry. Boucher served St. François Xavier until he returned to Quebec in 1833, at which time Provencher gave the total population of the parish as 424.[18] Boucher also accompanied the hunters to the plains, a task which was beginning to be recognized as an integral part of the mission work of St. François Xavier.

Before Boucher left, he began work on a new, much larger chapel, made of more substantial timber than the original one had been. Midnight Mass was said in this uncompleted building at Christmas in 1833.[19] Unfortunately, this chapel, like the previous one, suffered from lack of expertise in its construction. The beams had been set on sand, causing the whole building to lean in the middle, making it in urgent need of repairs very soon after its completion.

Charles-Edouard Poiré, who took over the care of the mission in 1834, knew the Sauteux language well enough to hear confessions and to teach Christian doctrine,[20] but his grasp of the language was not sound enough for preaching. This was a considerable handicap, since Sauteux, rather than French, appeared to be the usual language of the Métis of White Horse Plains at the time. Poiré intended to reside at White Horse Plains and begin a school, probably teaching in French.

As had all the previous missionaries at St. François Xavier, Poiré spent his first winter in the home of Cuthbert Grant. During the summer, he closed the school and travelled with the hunters to the prairies. While he was away, Mr. Belcourt from St. Paul's or Mr. Thibault from St. Boniface visited the mission.

Poiré asked Provencher if he could be financed by the support of the local people at White Horse Plains, as a curé in a settled parish would be. The collections were very small but Provencher agreed to this plan; it was one less mission to finance entirely from the Bishop's revenues. Consequently, in January 1834 the parish of St. François Xavier began its own register, separate from that of St. Boniface.

The population then was 503; there were fifty-eight baptisms, fourteen marriages and thirteen burials that year.[21] The Red River censuses of the early 1830s list the population of White Horse Plains as entirely Catholic in religion. Almost half of the heads of households in 1831 had been born in Canada, while the rest had been born in Rupert's Land.[22] Those born in Canada had probably been NWC servants, with Native wives and families, who were discharged after the merger of the two fur trade companies in 1821. Their children would then be first-generation Métis. The other men, who had been born in Rupert's Land, can be assumed to be first or second-generation Métis, descendants of earlier fur-traders of the Upper Great Lakes or the prairies, as Cuthbert Grant himself was.

Until 1834 the priests had always stayed with Cuthbert Grant's family but, as Grant's family grew, this became impossible. Provencher had a separate house built on the grounds of the mission, attached to the chapel.[23] When Poiré became the resident priest at White Horse Plains in 1834, however, he began to build a house for himself on Lot 1440, to which he had not received title from the HBC. The people of White Horse Plains contributed wood and labour and Poiré collected on some debts owing to him to finance this construction. Poiré also had some independent means, which freed him from total dependence on his parish revenues.

In December of 1834, the new two-storey house was not yet ready,[24] though Provencher expected it to be completed soon. In fact, the rectory remained unfinished during Poiré's time at St. François Xavier. Because

it was not in suitable shape for lodging and teaching school and catechism, Poiré accomplished very little as pastor at White Horse Plains.[25]

While stationed at White Horse Plains, he received assistance from Mr. Belcourt, whose mission of St. Paul was 31 km upstream on the Assiniboine. This experience occasioned Belcourt's complaints of Poiré's poor missionary work. Provencher at first dismissed these charges but, by the time Poiré asked to return to Canada in 1837, the Bishop was willing to recognize that the mission had failed to make much progress, due principally to the priest's lack of initiative.

> Il n'est pas homme à se créer de l'ouvrage. Par ici il aimera à être confortable et fera ce qui se présentera sans chercher beaucoup à faire venir l'eau à son moulin spirituel.[26]

When Poiré left Red River in August 1838 his house had a roof but was still not suitable for occupation and had been built with such poor logs that it already leaned.[27] Provencher took it over, though he would have preferred to build a new one. The Bishop hoped to obtain title to the land on which the priest had built his house and add enough to it to make up the six chains of land which Simpson was willing to assign to the mission of White Horse Plains.[28] In 1839, this was accomplished. The Catholic mission thenceforth occupied land which was later surveyed by the Dominion Land Survey as Lot 182.[29]

Mr. Thibault replaced Poiré at White Horse Plains in the summer of 1838 and resided there through the winter of 1838-39. During this period he visited Baie St. Paul each week, while Belcourt was in Quebec, returning the favours Belcourt had done for St. François Xavier in previous years. Thibault also visited another mission in the vicinity, perhaps Lake Manitoba. His primary concern, however, was the mission of St. François Xavier. He taught catechism to about thirty people throughout the year; in mid-June, sixteen of these people were sufficiently advanced in their religious studies to be admitted to the Eucharist. Thibault also baptized fifty-nine people and performed seven marriages.[30] This may be taken to represent a considerable increase in activity at the mission, substan-

tiating the complaints of Poiré's indolence. On the other hand, the population of White Horse Plains continued to grow, reaching 692 in 1840,[31] which could account for the increase in baptisms and marriages.

The growth in population also made it imperative to improve the chapel. Provencher had hoped to remove the chapel to the new site in 1839 but, since he could not find men to do the work, had to put off the project for another year. The Bishop also wanted to ensure his grant of land from the HBC, before dismantling the building and moving it. In 1840, the church was torn down and rebuilt solidly on Lot 182, near the house built by Poiré, fronting on the cart trail to the west. The church was covered with boards, shingles were prepared, and the flooring was made ready. Provencher estimated the cost of this to be about £60. In the next year, an inner ceiling and a sacristy would have to be built at the cost of another £60.[32] The rebuilt church continued to serve the people of St. François Xavier for another twenty to twenty-five years. The bell given to St. Boniface by Lord Selkirk was handed on to St. François Xavier, where it served until it was blown down by a storm in 1868.[33] Passing by in 1861, J.J. Hargrave thought the church very picturesque, with its tin-topped spire, and adjoining priest's house and nunnery.[34]

In 1840 Provencher sent Thibault to the Edmonton area and assigned Mr. Joseph Mayrand to the care of St. François Xavier. Mayrand had come to St. Boniface in 1838 after his ordination but he was a poor prospect for missionary work, because he was unwilling to learn the Native languages. By assigning Mayrand to St. François Xavier, Provencher hoped to force him to learn at least some words of Sauteux. Until he did so, Mr. Belcourt came to hear the confessions of those who did not speak French. Belcourt listed the population of White Horse Plains in 1839 as 700, some of whom were Métis,[35] and the rest French-Canadian. Presumably, it was the Métis who did not speak French.

Mayrand remained at White Horse Plains for three years. The priest's house built by Poiré, though still in bad shape, was weatherproofed so he could live in it during the winter. To the surprise of his bishop, Mayrand proved successful in this mission, perhaps without ever gaining

Fig. 8 Parish of St. Francois Xavier, 1874

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a knowledge of the Sauteux language, but apparently to the "grand contentement des habitants".[36] He learned some Cree and was able to live well at this mission, despite the minimal financial support he received from his parishioners.[37] The population at White Horse Plains changed at this time because a considerable number of Métis came down from the north to take up land at Grantown.[38] This influx, which contributed to a population of 841 in 1843,[39] may have made French the more usual tongue.

Mayrand moved to St. Boniface to assist there during the absence of Provencher from 1843 to 1844. His health had suffered during his time at Red River and in 1845 Provencher agreed that he should return east.[40]

Mr. Jean Edouard Darveau replaced Mayrand at St. François Xavier in 1843. He made a few essential repairs to the rectory but these were only stopgap measures. Like most buildings of Red River log construction, the house had sunk in spots and required firming up. It was also in bad need of weatherboarding to prevent draughts through the logs. The chimney was in such poor shape that it sometimes filled the attic with smoke; naturally this raised the fear of a fire.

Darveau began his work at St. François Xavier by establishing a temperance society, similar to the one Provencher had begun in St. Boniface. He claimed that it produced good results.[41] This movement, which had become very popular in Quebec in the 1840s, involved taking the pledge to abstain from liquor, joining a confraternity of those who had done so, walking in religious processions under the banner of the Temperance Society, and reinforcing each other's determination to adhere to the promise. It was a religious movement similar in many ways to the modern Alcoholics Anonymous but its moral code of behaviour imposed religious sanctions on those who broke it. It aimed at changing individual actions rather than imposing a public policy of prohibition. As with most such attempts, the religious fervour of the beginning was soon impeded by considerable backsliding. But in 1855 Taché upheld the value of the Temperance Society, which then had about 1000 persons enrolled between St. Boniface and White Horse Plains.[42] Incidents of drunkenness had diminished considerably, although Taché claimed he would only be satisfied when such occurrences disappeared completely.

Belcourt assisted Darveau and taught him Sauteux. Darveau found this division of responsibilities a very difficult situation, but his lessons in Sauteux enabled him to undertake missions such as Duck Bay, which only Belcourt had as yet been able to do. Provencher had great hopes for Darveau, who was filled with zeal for his missionary work; he was willing to undertake long travels, and more amenable to Provencher's ideas of missions than was Belcourt.

On one such trip, in March 1844, Darveau left St. François Xavier to visit the Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipegosis missions en route to the Pas. He was reported to have drowned on Lake Winnipegosis but was more probably killed by a Sauteux he had angered. After Darveau's death, priests from St. Paul or St. Boniface again visited St. François Xavier in the summer. Mr. Laflèche may have spent the winter there in 1844-45, in order to learn Cree from the inhabitants,[43] but Provencher had no priest available to take permanent charge of the mission. One of the priests from St. Boniface went there for all the Sundays and feast-days.

In 1845 Provencher welcomed the first two Oblates to undertake missions in his diocese. For the first time he could expect to have a steady and reliable flow of priests to his aid. By that time, however, he had decided to concentrate these priests on the northern missions, beginning with Ile à la Crosse, rather than on the missions near St. Boniface. Most of the Oblate priests, however, spent their first year in St. Boniface and received their introduction to the missionary life and the native language through visits to missions such as St. François Xavier. The first two Oblates to arrive in St. Boniface, Aubert and Taché, visited the mission, as did Pères Faraud, Bermond, Maisonneuve, and Tissot in later years. Mr. Belcourt and Bishop Provencher also made visits.

This pattern of visits continued until 1849 when Mr. Laflèche returned to St. Boniface from Ile à la Crosse; his rheumatism had become so bad he could not stay in the north. Laflèche agreed to stay in the West for a time to help Provencher and was stationed at White Horse Plains, where he would not face the same hardships as he had experienced in the north. Laflèche could also teach the catechism in Cree to those children or

adults who used that language. These may have been few in number by that time, or may have been the hivernants, for Laflèche wrote in 1855 that the population of St. François Xavier was composed of some Canadians and some Canadian Métis, all speaking French and living with the customs of the French-Canadians.[44]

Laflèche, an experienced missionary with a good knowledge of the Native languages, was very helpful in preparing young priests for their missionary work in the north. Several were stationed at White Horse Plains to assist him in the work of the parish, while they began to learn the Native languages. His years at White Horse Plains were invaluable for the training of the clergy and for the evangelization of the people of the St. Boniface Diocese.

Laflèche also continued the buffalo hunt mission to the Plains with his parishioners in the summer. This led to his presence at the stirring Battle of Grand Côteau in 1851, when the White Horse Plains hunters held off an attack by 1000 to 2000 Yankton Dakota. Laflèche acted as a military chaplain, exhorting his people to take courage and asking for God's protection and assistance.[45]

In 1850 the buildings of Baie St. Paul were taken down and transported to St. François Xavier for use there.[46] No record has been found of any additions to the church structure at this time, but some of the furnishings of Baie St. Paul may have been incorporated into St. François Xavier. The altar, with its grillwork of oak, with augured holes, was crafted by Belcourt and Thibault. The hand-made benches with wooden pegs had originated in the first chapel. Three chairs were made for the nuns with seats of laced buffalo-hide.[47] It is possible that these furnishings came from Belcourt's own chapel of Baie St. Paul, on which he had lavished so much of his attention. Provencher often complained of Belcourt spending his time at carpentry and blacksmithing, and even selling his services to others, instead of concentrating on preaching the Gospel. It appears likely that his chapel furnishings would have been preserved when Baie St. Paul was abandoned; they may even be among those now kept at St. François Xavier.

Despite its drawbacks, the old rectory continued to be used. The Grey

Fig. 9 Saint François Xavier Church c. 1868

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Nuns occupied it when they arrived in St. François Xavier in 1850.[48] A new rectory must have been built before then, but no details of its construction are available. Perhaps the material from Baie St. Paul was used in it. The rectory was reported to be falling into ruins by 1859, affording no protection against the weather,[49] but it is unclear whether this referred to the old or the newer rectory.

In 1852, Laflèche was recalled to St. Boniface, where his knowledge of English was required to deal with Irish settlers, who threatened to leave the country.[50] These may have been some of the Chelsea Pensioners, who had been sent as a defence force for Red River in 1848. Thibault, who replaced Laflèche, had been stationed at St. François Xavier in the 1830s and had then spent many years in the far western missions around Edmonton. He had a good knowledge of Cree and understood Sauteux, which was useful in White Horse Plains. Many of his parishioners did not speak any other language - a fact which appears to contradict Laflèche's assertion that French was the principal language there. In all probability, the use of Native languages was by that time more characteristic of the hivernants, who formed a large element within the parish of St. François Xavier.

Thibault had considerable experience within the St. Boniface area and this enabled him to work well with the Métis. Taché estimated the population of the parish in 1859 as almost 200 full-time resident families, with a total of 1200 people. Several hundred others belonged to the parish but passed most of the year on the prairie; they came in to White Horse Plains only at certain times of the year to bring in pemmican and to secure supplies. On these occasions the priest would regularize their marriages, baptize their children, give instruction in the faith, and perform the other duties required of him. When these hivernants were included in the figures of the parish, the population of St. François Xavier could reach perhaps 2000.[51] The parish registers with their lists of baptisms and marriages thus reveal the existence of a large population of Métis who do not show up in the censuses of land-holders in Red River.

Unfortunately for the historian, few of Thibault's letters or comments on the mission survive. In part, this is due to the fire of 1860 which destroyed so much of the archives of St. Boniface along with the

Fig. 10 Saint François Xavier priest's home

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cathedral. As well, Thibault probably reached decisions on the mission through personal consultation with Bishop Taché rather than through correspondence.

Taché intended to get materials ready to replace both the church and the rectory in the summer of 1859, and estimated that he would need 10,000 francs to finish the church.[52] Work on the new structure went very slowly, delayed by spring floods which washed away the oak and spruce prepared for the project, and by the realization that a stone foundation was necessary for the stability of the church. In the summer of 1862, the church was almost finished, and was expected to be opened for worship in the fall.[53]

The actual date of completion of this church has not been ascertained, but construction appears to have dragged on through much of the 1860s. In 1868, Brother C. Guillet noted that both the church and the rectory were very dilapidated.[54] With all its uncertainties of construction, this church lasted until about 1899 when Archbishop Langevin considered it so run-down that a new one would have to be built.

Education

Some schooling was carried on at White Horse Plains by almost all the missionaries stationed there. Education was a tool of mission work and proceeded along with instruction in the faith. Like the mission work proper, the educational aspect was often interrupted or stopped while priests were away on trips or only visiting the mission. A further drawback was the use of Native languages, rather than French, by the Métis, a factor which slowed their progress in education, since the first priests and teachers only knew French. A retired HBC clerk, who perhaps did know the Sauteux or Cree languages, taught the boys for a time in 1828, but this school did not continue.[55] In 1832-3 the priest taught about forty children throughout the winter.[56]

Provencher was well aware of the importance of providing schooling, not only for the improvement of the mission, but also to offset the advantages gained by the Anglican missionaries with their schools. As early as 1844, he mentioned his desire to build a school at White Horse Plains

and staff it with two or three Grey Nuns. The people there at the time, however, wanted an English school and the few nuns he had at St. Boniface only spoke French.[57]

When Laflèche asked in 1850 for two nuns to teach at St. François Xavier, however, Provencher arranged with the Grey Nuns to do so, even without any financial resources or hope of tuition fees. Soeurs Marie-Eulalie Lagrave and Hedwige Lafrance moved to White Horse Plains on 5 November 1850 to begin a school for both boys and girls in the old rectory.[58] Both these nuns had been with the first group of four who came to St. Boniface in 1844. It is unlikely that they had learned English in the meantime; it appears probable that the people had by then accepted teaching in French. These sisters, fulfilling the many-faceted vocation of the Grey Nuns, undertook health-care duties, catechizing, care of church linen, choir direction, and care of the church and rectory, as well as teaching.

A school had been built near the church in 1843, perhaps attached to the rectory.[59] This was probably the building used by the nuns, whose classes were soon filled with children anxious to see "the women of prayer",[60] and to learn to speak, read and sing in French. Provencher intended to repair and rebuild the school in 1853, because it was then falling into ruins.[61]

From 1852 to 1869 Mr. Dominic Bibeau taught a parochial school for boys, while the nuns continued to teach the girls.[62] There is some question about the accuracy of this information. The Nor'Wester of 28 April 1860 noted that there was only one school at White Horse Plains, in which thirteen boys and twenty-six girls were taught by the nuns. Out of a total population of about 1200, exclusive of the hivernants, this appears to be a small number of children enrolled in school. Probably Bibeau's school was not included within the list of Catholic schools presented in the Nor'Wester.

By 1871 the Grey Nun's school, then known as St. François Xavier Centre, had 76 pupils enrolled, while St. François Xavier East had 25 and St. François Xavier West had 85. These figures indicate the direction of the growth of population in the area, and the fact that the Grey Nuns

still had a solid basis of support for their school. The school inspection revealed that the room was a little low, but was well-lit and provided with ventilators.[63]

By the 1860s, St. François Xavier had become much more of a settled parish than a mission station. It had never been intended to serve a primarily itinerant population. Although the original Métis inhabitants left the settlement for long periods of time in the summer, they maintained their houses and land throughout the year. Priests from St. Boniface or St. Paul came to White Horse Plains to say Mass on Sundays and feast-days, even when no priest was stationed there. When a resident priest was there, he too would often be away during the period when his parishioners were on the Plains, either accompanying them to the hunt, or visiting itinerant mission stations on Lake Manitoba or Duck Bay.

In the beginning of this mission knowledge of the Cree and Sauteux languages was considered essential but this did not continue. Perhaps those who leaned to the Indian way of life joined the newer mission of St. Paul, farther west on the Assiniboine. The priests of the 1840s and after seem to have functioned primarily in French, with Native languages as secondary resources. Nonetheless, these priests maintained an integral connection with the work of Indian missions.

The resident priest in the 1850s and 1860s was an older man with experience in the faraway missions of the diocese, and younger men just beginning their missionary career often spent a year at St. François Xavier under his tutelage. White Horse Plains was an introduction to the harsher requirements of the northern missions and to the lack of amenities they would endure. On the other hand, it represented a semi-retirement from the missions for those who had already spent years in the north.

The Earl of Southesk visited St. François Xavier on a Sunday in January, 1860. He described the log houses as simple square boxes, bereft of ornamentation, with projecting iron stove-pipes as chimneys. He noted also that the houses had neither gardens nor fences, which seems to indicate a lack of cultivated land. As he passed by, about 200 people "more or less of French-Canadian blood"[64] were just coming out of the

Fig. 11 Saint François Xavier Convent

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church. Southesk was very impressed by their distinctive clothing. The men wore dark blue capots or blanket-cloth coats and leggings, and caps of the same fabric or of a dark fur. This sombre costume was made colourful by a scarlet or many-coloured scarf worn around the waist, and red stripes, embroidered with various-coloured ribbons, down the outside of the leggings. The women wore dark dresses with blankets, shawls, or crimson or yellow silk handkerchiefs on their heads.

Père Petitot visited St. François Xavier at the end of May, 1862. It was Sunday and all of the Métis were at Mass, before going on the summer hunt. Petitot was impressed by the number of carts, the colourful dress, and the men on horseback: "Si l'on veut contempler le Métis français dans toute sa gloire, c'est à cheval qu'il faut le voir".[65] He claimed that none of these people spoke French, although they could understand him when he spoke. He found a great difference between the Métis of St. François Xavier and those of St. Boniface, a difference he attributed to the wandering life of the Métis of White Horse Plains. Petitot probably had encountered the hivernants, rather than the settled population.

The life of the parish began to change somewhat after Lane's Post opened to the west; there the HBC carried on extensive farming operations and kept cattle for use in the cart brigades to the West. A watermill was in operation in 1861, at a time when all the others in the area ran dry.[66] In 1868, the machinery from the earliest steamboat on the Red, the **Pioneer**, which had been remade from the **Anson Northup**, was sent to White Horse Plains for use in the flour mill there.[67] This suggests that the transition to an agricultural life on the White Horse Plains and vicinity was fairly advanced at the time.

In 1868, Abbé Francis Xavier Kavanagh, vicar of St. Boniface since 1866, came to assist Thibault at Sc. François Xavier; in 1869 he became curé. In that year he undertook a census of the parish and gave the total as 218 families or 1227 Catholics.[68] These families were still almost entirely Métis; in 1872 the population of 1804 Métis at White Horse Plains was higher than in any other of the parishes of St. Boniface.[69] But the population base of the parish began to change as the Métis, often dispossessed, moved farther west and immigrants from Ontario and Quebec

settled in their place. As early as 1870, many of the families from St. François Xavier had moved to Père Decorby's new mission near Lake Qu'Appelle.[70] By 1882, some of the families of St. François Xavier had joined with some from Baie St. Paul to form a small settlement at Fort Ellice.[71]

Abbé Kavanagh continued as pastor of St. François Xavier for forty years until he resigned at the age of eighty. Even then he continued to live out his retirement years there until his death in 1922. His career exemplified the stability of parish life in comparison with the frequent changes of clergy which had marked the early years of existence of St. François Xavier. But it was a stability based on a population and on a way of life which had supplanted the old freedom of the Métis buffalo hunt, with its long months on the prairies far from the little settlement at White Horse Plains.

Notes St. François Xavier

1. Lettres, pp. 16-18. Provencher to Plessis, 13 September 1818.

2. Ibid, pp. 38-9. Provencher to Plessis, 27 July 1819.

3. Ibid, p. 76. Provencher to Plessis, 11 August 1822.

4. Ibid, p. 88. Provencher to Plessis, 16 July 1823.

5. Cited in McLeod and Morton, op. cit., p. 88.

6. Ibid.

7. Lettres, pp. 100-105. Provencher to Plessis, 12 June 1825.

8. HBCA B235/a/6, fo. 20-24, 3 January 1825-18 February 1825 and B235/a/7, fo. 23-28d, 7 March 1826-5 April 1826.

9. HBCA B235/a/7, fo. 21d-23d.

10. HBCA B235/a/7, fo. 29, 8 April 1826.

11. Lettres, p. 112. Provencher to Plessis, 2 February 1826.

12. RMQ No. 10 (March 1853). Laflèche to a friend, 4 September 1851.

13. Earl of Southesk, Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains. (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1875), p. 40.

14. McLeod & Morton, op. cit., p. 114.

15. Lettres, p. 122. Provencher to Panet, 18 June 1828. "Mr. Harper is almost always travelling for the good of souls".

16. Lettres, p. 128. Provencher to Panet, 6 June 1829.

17. Lettres, pp. 131-33. Provencher to Panet, 23 July 1831.

18. NAC MG17A22 F840 #10939. Provencher to Propagation de la Foi, 10 July 1833.

19. PAM MG7D6. St. François-Xavier. C.E. Poiré, "Notes sur la Prairie du Cheval Blanc".

20. AASB P3683. Provencher to Lartigue, 13 July 1834.

21. "Les Registres de la Colonie de la Rivière Rouge", LCSB Vol. XXXI (1932), p. 40.

22. HBCA E5/5. Census, 1831.

23. Lettres, pp. 136-7. Provencher to Signay, 16 July 1834.

24. Lettres, p. 144. Provencher to Signay, 17-18 December 1834.

25. NAC MG17A22 F840 #10938. Provencher, "Notice..."

26. Lettres, p. 156. Provencher to Signay, 17 November 1836. "He is not the kind of man to make work for himself. In my opinion, he would like to be comfortable and will do what turns up without trying very hard to bring water to his spiritual mill."

27. Ibid, p. 163. Provencher to Signay, 17 April 1837.

28. Lettres, pp. 181-2. Provencher to Signay, 8 July 1839.

29. NAC RG15DII. Manitoba Act Grant File 10213 and 5477, Manitoba Métis Land Commission.

30. AASB P1792-96. Thibault to Signay, 6 July 1839.

31. HBCA E5/5. Red River Census, 1831 and 1840.

32. RMQ No.3 (January 1841), pp. 8-9. Provencher to Signay, 25 June 1840.

33. McLeod & Morton, op. cit., p. 130.

34. James J. Hargrave, Red River (Reprint. Altona, Manitoba: Friesen Printers, 1977), p. 203.

35. NAC Notice sur les missions du Diocèse de Québec, No. 1, January 1839, p. 4.

36. Lettres, p. 213. Provencher to Signay, 2 January 1843. "the great satisfaction of the residents".

37. Lettres, p. 205. Provencher to Signay, 30 June 1842.

38. McLeod & Morton, op. cit., p. 129.

39. HBCA E5/5. Red River Census, 1840 & 1843.

40. Lettres, p. 239. Provencher to Signay, 20 June 1845.

41. AASB P0798. Darveau to Provencher, 29 February 1844.

42. HBCA D5/40, fo. 67-8. Taché to Simpson, 7 February 1855.

43. RMQ July 1845 No. 6, p. 99. Extract of a letter from Provencher to Bishop of Quebec, 6 July 1844.

44. AASB T56449-56470. Laflèche "Etude sur les missions de la Rivière-Rouge depuis les débuts jusqu'en 1854".

45. W.L Morton, "The Battle at the Grand Coteau, July 13 and 14, 1851", Papers Read Before the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, Series III, No. 16 (1961), pp. 37-49. Also J. Wesley Bond, Minnesota and Its Resources, New York: Redfield, 1853.

46. AASB F0429. Betsy Fisher to her father, 24 February 1850.

47. McLeod & Morton, op. cit., p. 113-14.

48. Soeur May Guichon, S.G.M. Développement des Oeuvres des Soeurs Grises au Manitoba depuis leur Fondation à Saint-Boniface 1844-1944, p. 22.

49. NAC MG17A22 F841 # 10978, Taché to Pres. of Council, Propagation de la Foi, 28 January 1859.

50. AD G-LPP 333. Bermond to Faraud, 4 November 1852.

51. Marcel Giraud, The Métis in the Canadian West, 2 vols. Transl. Geo. Woodcock. (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986), Vol. II, p. 845.

52. NAC MG17A22 F841 # 10980. Taché, Report to Propagation de la Foi, 1859.

53. PAA 71.220 #210. Lestanc to Vegreville, 26 July 1862.

54. PAA 71.220 #6486. Journal of Fr. C. Guillet, p. 5, 11 July 1868.

55. Lettres, p. 127. Provencher to Panet, 6 June 1829.

56. NAC MG17A22 F840 #10937. Provencher to Propagation de la Foi, 10 July 1833.

57. NAC MG17A22 F840 # 10948. Provencher to Propagation de la Foi, 4 August 1844.

58. LCSB Vol. XLIII (1944), p. 138. "Soeur Marie-Eulalie Lagrave (1805- 1859)".

59. Lettres, p. 221. Provencher to Signay, 6 November 1843;
Missions, 1887. Rapport de Mgr. Alex. Taché.

60. PAM MG7D2. Manuscript Chronicles of Grey Nuns.

61. NAC MG17A22 F840 #10957. Provencher to Propagation de la Foi, 13 November 1852.

62. Our First Hundred Years: History of St. François Xavier Municipality (Steinbach, Man.: Derksen Printers, 1980).

63. Rapport.... Education, 1871.

64. Earl of Southesk, op. cit., pp. 348-9.

65. E. Petitot, En route pour la mer glaciale. "If you want to see the French Métis in all his glory, you must see him on horse-back."

66. PAA 71.220/1053 #28. Thibault to Taché, 4 November 1861.

67. HBCA A12/45, fo. 11d. Mactavish to London, 24 February 1868.

68. LCSB XXXII (1934), p. 284.

69. AASB T10845. Archibald to Taché, 1872.

70. M. Giraud, "Métis Settlement....". Citation from AASB, Decorby letter of 1 January 1872.

71. Ibid. From AASB Liste des familles de Fort Ellice, 7 November 1882.

Baie St. Paul (Saint Paul des Sauteux)

This Indian mission is a striking anomaly within the history of Roman Catholic missions of St. Boniface in the pre-1870 period. Its brief existence is inseparable from the bitter clash of opinion between Mr. Belcourt and Bishop Provencher over proper mission methods, a conflict made more acrimonious by the personality differences which made it impossible for these two men to work amicably together, despite their common goals.

Provencher had travelled to Quebec in 1830 to raise funds for his new stone cathedral and to recruit more priests to come to St. Boniface. Mr. Georges Antoine Belcourt was the only one willing to transfer to Red River; he accompanied Provencher back to St. Boniface in 1831. Although he had been reluctant to leave Quebec, Belcourt threw himself wholeheartedly into the work Provencher assigned to him, learning the Native language and working with the Sauteux near the Red River Settlement. Even before leaving Quebec, Belcourt had studied the Algonkian language at Lac des Deux Montagnes. His gift for languages made it relatively easy for him to learn Sauteux, another Algonkian language, once he reached Red River.

Provencher had never previously been able to pursue this type of mission activity. The maximum number of priests at St. Boniface at any time in the 1820s and 1830s was four. They were fully occupied in St. Boniface, St. François Xavier, and the buffalo hunt. Even if he had wanted to assign one of these priests to the Indian mission work of his huge diocese, none stayed long enough to become fluent in any Native language. As a result, Catholic missions to the Sauteux or other Indians remained in abeyance.

Provencher's determination to assign Belcourt to Indian mission work

at this particular time was influenced by the Anglican Church entry into the field. Rev. William Cockran began a mission for the Sauteux and Swampy Cree at Netley Creek in 1831 and tried to influence them to establish an agricultural settlement and abandon their hunting life. Cockran soon moved the mission to Cook's Creek, where the better soil offered prospects for more successful farming, and named the mission St. Peter's. This Anglican establishment goaded Provencher into beginning Catholic mission work with the Sauteux, lest they all become Anglicans.

The year after his arrival, Belcourt was ready to establish his mission at a site on the north bank of the Assiniboine river, near the present Portage La Prairie.[1] He hoped to build a chapel and farm, gathering the Sauteux to live around him. This sedentary life would prepare them to receive instruction from him, something he thought would be impossible if he followed them on their traditional yearly round. Initially, he had the support of Provencher, who praised him highly:

> C'est un homme propre à tout, qui fait de tout et très bien. Il sait la langue sauvage, il a composé un dictionnaire et sa grammaire est avancée... Les sauvages l'aiment comme leur père et sont prêts à se laisser instruire.[2]

Governor Simpson also approved of this mission; Provencher asked him to show his support by giving the mission 30 pickaxes and the ironwork needed for a plough. The following spring Provencher intended to give Belcourt some oxen so that he could work a larger area of land, where the Sauteux could plant potatoes and Indian corn.[3]

In April, 1833, Belcourt moved to the new mission, which he dedicated to Saint Paul des Sauteux. St. Paul was the exemplar of missionaries to the Gentiles or heathen; to name the new mission after him was an expression of confidence that Belcourt in his mission to the Sauteux would follow in the Apostle's footsteps. Most of the Sauteux, however, soon left for the buffalo hunt; they belonged to the Plains Ojibwa or Sauteux, rather than to the Ojibwa who still lived primarily in the forest. Belcourt taught catechism to the few who remained and began to build a

Fig. 12 Rev. Georges-Antoine Belcourt

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small log chapel. Because the site was too exposed to attack from the Plains tribes, the Sauteux refused to remain there.[4]

Belcourt therefore withdrew his mission to a more sheltered spot, also on the north bank of the Assiniboine River, at Prairie du Fournier, about 18 kms west of St. François Xavier. The new establishment was also called St. Paul, more commonly known as Baie St. Paul. Belcourt asked Governor Simpson to grant him eight kms of frontage on either side of the Assiniboine River at this point, to a depth of three kms.[5] But the Governor considered this much too large a grant and refused to recommend it to the London Committee of the HBC.[6] Instead, 29.5 ha of land was granted on the instructions of Simpson, according to the notation in the HBC Land Register. No date for this grant was given.[7] This was Lot 1509 in the HBC Register and became part of Lot 205 in the Dominion Land Survey.

Belcourt spent the winter of 1833-34 in St. Boniface and moved to Baie St. Paul in the spring, intending to live there the whole year.[8] He was optimistic for the prospects of convincing the Sauteux to live in a village around him. Provencher too was at first enthusiastic about the possibilities of this mission, although when he visited the mission twice during the winter of 1834-35, he found very few Sauteux there.

In Belcourt's appraisal of his first mission efforts with the Sauteux can be found not only his own attitude, but that of the Sauteux to him and the new religion he preached. He stressed the punishment of the sinner and the pains of hell, to such effect that, according to him, the Sauteux agreed to have only one wife and marry in the Church, to be instructed and to have their children baptized, to renounce drink and not to invoke several manitous, not to use medicines of vengeance, to listen to Belcourt and not to laugh at what he said. They resisted becoming catechumens, however, because they would not then be able to pray to their manitou or author of life for help for the sick. Belcourt hoped this belief could be adapted to intercessory prayers to a guardian angel and thus enable the Sauteux to adopt Catholicism.[9]

Despite these obstacles to his preaching, Belcourt had high hopes for

numerous conversions. In his report to the Bishop of Quebec in June, 1835, only a year after he had settled at Baie St. Paul, he claimed that "je puis dire sans exagérer que le nombre de catéchumènes exède celui de 150 mais qui ne sont jamais trouvés tous ensemble à l'instruction".[10] By June 25, 1835, Belcourt had baptized seventy-two children and adults, blessed eight marriages and conducted three funerals. According to him, these new Christians were unshakeable in their faith.[11] The spiritual aspect of his missionary work appeared to be proceeding very well.

Provencher's first enthusiasm for Belcourt's mission soon waned and the divergence of views between the two men became ever more pronounced. The Bishop disagreed with Belcourt's plans and hopes for a village of resident Sauteux, who would be full-time recipients of catechizing. He thought it impossible to change the Sauteux way of life to such an extent. In his opinion, the missionary should adapt his life and follow the Sauteux to places where they gathered in large numbers at certain seasons of the year, "chose pénible à la vérité mais indispensable."[12] This was the more necessary because, although Baie St. Paul was more secure from attack than the first site chosen by Belcourt, it was less suitable for subsistence and less likely to draw the Sauteux to take up the agricultural life.[13] Provencher already saw little hope for the success of this mission.

Belcourt pressed forward with his own plans, however, and immediately began to build a house-chapel, which would also be used as a school.[14] He also built a kitchen, and later added a blacksmith's shop, where he pursued his work as a tradesman for hire. As bishop, Provencher was responsible for funding such projects but he was unwilling to commit his meagre funds to support what he perceived as a useless waste. "Il ne fallait pas faire les missions à la protestante, c'est-à-dire acheter les sauvages mais les gagner par la persuasion."[15] Provencher suspected that Belcourt's insistence on building was motivated by fear that the Sauteux would laugh at his instructions and ridicule those who came to listen to him, if he conducted them outside.[16]

After his chapel was built, Belcourt laid out a village plan with

streets and houses for the mission. In 1835-36 the Sauteux built 10 log houses in the village. The agricultural work, so inseparable from the mission theory Belcourt espoused, made some progress. A hired hand worked the mission fields. In the spring of 1835, about thirty families arrived early enough to plant potatoes, corn and barley.[17] Belcourt regarded this as "le premier pas de leur conversion",[18] while Provencher claimed that Belcourt and the hired man did most of the work.

In 1836, Belcourt built a much larger two-storey chapel-school but it was far too large for the ten families who constituted the mission at the time, according to Provencher. The chapel itself occupied the second storey, which had an arched roof over the horizontal beams. The first floor was to be used as the school. This chapel-school was hardly built before it needed repairs and Provencher bitterly resented this drain on his funds. He claimed the building was only held up by its beams, half of which were posts still exposed at the top. Belcourt had put small rooms on each side, whose only function was to keep the whole framework from total collapse. The roof as yet had only one coat of mortar to preserve it from leaks.[19]

Opposition from Provencher was not the only adversity confronting Belcourt. The Sauteux at times seemed almost impervious to his best efforts, because certain traditional customs and beliefs presented serious obstacles to their adoption of Christianity. Polygamy was one of the most evident; it kept several men from conversion. If they agreed to have only one wife, they preferred to choose the youngest, rather than the first wife. This proved a recurring problem for missionaries. The authority of the elders also challenged that of the priest and prevented some of those interested in Christianity from accepting instruction from Belcourt. The Sauteux would readily allow their children to be baptized and the women were eager to embrace the faith, but they could only do so with the consent of the elders of the tribe. Others, perhaps more polite than truthful, promised to come and listen to Belcourt but never came.

Belcourt persisted in his conviction that his methods would bear fruit. He continued to hope for the conversion of these souls through agricul-

ture, education and then evangelization. Those whom Belcourt felt sure would persevere in their new faith and serve as good examples for the others were baptized.[20] Within a few years, several of the Sauteux could read and write and knew their catechisms. During the Easter celebrations of 1836, he admitted five to Communion, in recognition of their commitment to the faith. He wrote that their religious fervour would shame many who had been Christians for a long time.[21] Such a contrast of new Native converts to the Catholics of Europe or Canada was a prevalent theme in nineteenth-century mission literature.

Belcourt's hyperbole could not disguise the fact that both the spiritual and material aspects of his mission to the Sauteux were not as successful as he claimed. Like Mr. Cockran of St. Peter's, he was attempting to introduce a basic cultural change from a semi-nomadic hunting life to a sedentary agricultural life, in a society and in an area where such a change was uneconomic and unthinkable at the time. Red River agriculture was difficult even for those accustomed to a settled life; Belcourt's own farming efforts often failed. Floods, grasshoppers, and frosts destroyed crops so often that the Red River Settlement still depended heavily on the products of the buffalo hunt. The fur trade dependence on pemmican was even more pronounced.

The Sauteux had adjusted their society to the provisioning of the fur trade and settlement. Twice a year, the Sauteux and Métis left for the summer and fall buffalo hunts which provided the base of their economy. Supplementing this, they fished in the Assiniboine River and nearby lakes, and hunted in the forests. Agricultural products could add little to this subsistence and certainly could not serve as complete replacement. It is no wonder that the Sauteux refused to settle near Belcourt for the whole year.

The number of residents at Baie St. Paul grew very slowly, although news of its existence did spread across the prairies. Two Sauteux from near the Rocky Mountains visited Belcourt in 1836 to find out more about his mission which, to them, was a very curious innovation.[22] They assured Belcourt that they would return with their relatives to learn more about

Fig. 14 Saulteaux Woman and Child c. 1885

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his God, but appear not to have done so. The arrival of some from so far away so soon after the foundation of the mission indicates the speed with which news spread, without the advantages of modern technology.

Some of the Red Lake Chippewa spent a considerable time at Baie St. Paul in the winter of 1842-43 and Belcourt expected some of them would move to stay.[23] His expectations appear not to have been realized. Their presence even for one season does point to the very close links between the Ojibwa north and south of the forty-ninth parallel, bonds which persisted despite the international boundary which separated them.

Until 1838 Belcourt spent most of the year at Baie St. Paul, but he had to accept the fact that most of his village would spend months away from his chapel and school. He used this time to give itinerant missions at Duck Bay, Swan Lake, and Rainy Lake. While Belcourt undertook these trips, the priest from St. François Xavier came to say Sunday Mass at St. Paul or, occasionally, a priest would come directly from St. Boniface. Belcourt regretted leaving his flock for long periods of time for his other missionary activity, and thought his mission tended to deteriorate during his absence.

By this time, Provencher was ready to write off the whole mission as an expensive and worthless one. It had already cost him £600, which he considered far too much for the benefits it showed. According to the Bishop, Belcourt did almost all of the physical work of the mission himself, had very few catechumens, and his chapel was falling down before it was finished. More serious than this was Provencher's belief that Belcourt did very little to evangelize the Sauteux, giving instruction only on Sundays and during the Mass. Most of the religious instruction devolved on Angélique Nolin, who taught the school. Furthermore, Belcourt sold his services as tradesman; people came to him to make door-frames, cart-wheels, and other similar products. Provencher thought these activities were unsuitable for a priest and took time which should have been spent on instruction of the Sauteux. On the other hand, Belcourt claimed that he did this kind of work only because Provencher kept him so short of the money required by his mission.[24]

Fig. 15 Chippewa Indian, n.d.

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Education

The Anglicans used education, in English, as a means to draw the Indians to their missions. Belcourt countered this by teaching school in Sauteux at St. Paul, but too often he had no time to teach. As education was an integral component of his concept of mission, he was pleased to have Angélique Nolin as a teacher for his Sauteux from 1834 to 1839. Belcourt himself produced school books in the Sauteux language;[25] he had hoped to bring in a small printing press but this proved to be too expensive and unwieldy for canoe transport.[26]

Belcourt's school plans foundered, however, when Angélique Nolin left St. Paul's in 1839. He was forced to provide instruction himself whenever he could. In 1842, he was able to hire a Métis girl, Isabelle Gladu, to teach catechism and school while he was away; she had been instructed by Mr. Poiré at St. François Xavier.[27] This was only a temporary solution, however, and although some of the Baie St. Paul residents learned to read, schooling at St. Paul's was minimal and frequently interrupted for long periods of time.

Belcourt also tried to begin an industrial school to teach the women to produce cloth from buffalo wool. He was convinced that the Sauteux women would soon get used to this kind of work and that it would benefit the whole nation. He was unable even to begin such an enterprise, however, for lack of proper instructors. When Angélique Nolin left the mission, no one remained who could even use a spinning wheel. Thus the attempt to win over the Sauteux to "civilization" through agriculture for the men and education in "women's work" for the women faltered on both counts. Belcourt was a man of many ideas and projects. His industrial school, like so many of these, proved impracticable.

New schools were begun in the early 1870s, but these were for the Métis and settlers of the new parish. They were but one aspect of the many changes which had occurred among the people and parishes of Red River, since Belcourt first began his mission to the Sauteux so many years before.

Changes at Baie St. Paul in the 1840s

In 1838-39 Belcourt travelled to Quebec to raise funds for his mission. Provencher feared that the Sauteux might leave the mission during his absence and end any prospects for success there. To counter this, he hoped to station Mr. Thibault at Baie St. Paul. Thibault, however, stayed at St. François Xavier and went to St. Paul's only on Sundays and feast days to say Mass. Thibault did not share Belcourt's high opinion of this mission. Although he baptized nine adults, five of them Sauteux, and about the same number of children, Thibault thought the Sauteux were unwilling to listen to his instructions, at least for the present. At the school, he reported that Miss Nolin taught catechism to about fifteen people; about five or six were learning to read.[28]

In his fund-raising letter to the Bishop of Quebec at this time, however, Belcourt claimed that he had 300 Christians and nearly 150 catechumens. He asserted that he did not baptize his catechumens until they had proved themselves for two years. Even after that, they were not admitted to Communion for another year. Only about twenty had by then received Communion. According to Belcourt, the Sauteux had a particular devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin; they recited the rosary every day and wore a rosary around their necks as a sign of their consecration to Mary.[29] This letter is full of the romanticism which dominated mission literature of the nineteenth century, with visions of the "noble savage" who only had to hear the word of God to become the most devout of Christians.

Although much of Belcourt's report to Quebec reflected wishful thinking, he was a superb propagandist for his cause and won the whole-hearted support of the Bishop of Quebec and his colleagues. The Bishop later sent a silver medal for Belcourt to give to the Sauteux chief of his mission. The Sauteux attached to the mission appear to have had no recognized chief, and Belcourt planned to hold an election when the hunters returned. The chief selected would then receive the medal with appropriate ceremony.[30] Belcourt's mission thus made some attempt at

introducing political, as well as economic and religious, changes into Sauteux society.

Belcourt was so persuasive of his own point of view on mission work, and so convincing that Provencher's unwillingness to finance his ideas was the only thing preventing him from great success, that the Quebec branch of the Association for the Propagation of the Faith agreed to fund his mission separately from those of Provencher. This was a very unusual step to take, since Catholic missionaries were under the spiritual and material authority of their bishop. It was a great slight to Provencher's control of his own diocese and over his own priests but he could do nothing about it. The gossip about this spread among the the people on the boats from Montreal before the news reached Provencher himself; this added to his resentment over the shabby treatment he had received.[31]

Belcourt continued to baptize and confess his catechumens throughout the remainder of his time in Red River. They came to Communion regularly each month and many attended daily Mass. Belcourt organized confraternities of **Notre Dame Auxiliatrice** and **Saint Coeur de Marie** for the Sauteux.[32] These religious societies, especially those devoted to Mary, were distinguished by particular devotions, medals, and prayers, and were characteristic of the Church throughout the nineteenth-century world. Through such methods, the Sauteux were to be incorporated into the practices of the universal Church, rather than being encouraged to develop indigenous Catholic customs. Indigenization in language, however, except for the Latin Mass, was customary in the Catholic missions and at Sunday Mass the catechumens sang hymns translated into Sauteux by Belcourt.

Provencher visited the mission to confirm more than thirty Christians in 1839 and twenty-two in 1840, but continued to think the mission unsuccessful. He agreed that the few real converts were good Christians but noted that there were very few new ones. Some of those he confirmed were Métis brought up with the Indians, who appear to have been absorbed into their maternal culture, for they knew only the Indian language and could not speak French.[33]

Baie St. Paul was not included in the Red River censuses until 1840,

when its population was ninety-eight. At that time, only .8 hectares of land were being cultivated, not by the Sauteux but by François Desjarlais, Belcourt's hired man. The mission had 13 houses and 11 stables, with 17 horses, 15 mares, one bull and 211 cows, 17 calves and 8 pigs.[34] The livestock investment alone appeared very heavy. Provencher remained pessimistic about the mission, however, and thought it would soon have to be abandoned, unless the Métis moved in to make a small parish similar to that at White Horse Plains.[35] This process appears to have taken place, for by 1843 the population had reached 187, all listed as Catholic, and included more Métis, judging from the prevalence of French rather than Sauteux names, and from the fact that they were listed as "born in Rupertsland" rather than as "Native". At that time, 20.8 ha of land were cultivated, which represented a large increase in such a short period of time. In addition, there were 22 houses, 23 stables, 38 oxen, 26 horses, 43 mares and 24 sheep.[36] This livestock appears to reflect a buffalo hunt and carting economy, rather than an agricultural one, but the increase in cultivated land and the presence of sheep indicate at least the beginnings of a transition to agriculture.

In 1842 Belcourt built a house at Baie St. Paul, apparently at Provencher's request. If the Bishop of Quebec responded as Provencher hoped to his frequent appeals for more priests, he intended to station them in this house, where they could receive instruction in the Native languages from Belcourt. In fact, however, when Belcourt taught Sauteux to Taché and Laflèche during 1845-46, he moved to St. Boniface to do so, because he had no suitable facilities at St. Paul. He was not needed then at Baie St. Paul, because many of the people were away for the winter, due to the severe threat of starvation that year.[37]

Although Belcourt continued to stress the necessity for agriculture in the small mission of Baie St. Paul, he began to accept the more-than-equal need to pursue the buffalo hunt. In 1841 his mission was very prosperous because of the combination of a good harvest and a very successful hunt.[38] In the fall of 1845 and again in the summer and fall of 1846, Belcourt followed his people to the hunt, which was more than ever

necessary as food source. The severe flooding on the Assiniboine in 1846 destroyed crops and left only Belcourt's mission above water; the people came to Mass in canoes, which they tied to the front steps of the church.[39] During the second of these trips, Belcourt had to act as doctor as well as priest to his Sauteux, many of whom fell victims to the measles and dysentery which raged through Red River that year. In three weeks, twenty of the residents of St. Paul died.[40]

Although Baie St. Paul was intended to be a Sauteux mission, Belcourt had a great deal of contact with the neighbouring Métis, and became a strong supporter of their interests. In 1845 he translated a long petition from the Métis to the United States government, which had tried to forbid them to hunt south of the border.[41] Belcourt also became involved in political affairs of the Red River Colony in 1846 when he prepared a petition from the Métis to Queen Victoria containing their grievances against the HBC. An alternative market for their furs had been opened via St. Paul in the Minnesota Territory of the United States but the HBC opposed any such trade as an infringement on their monopoly. The Métis considered it their right to trade for the best prices wherever they pleased. Belcourt claimed that his action had helped to calm down the Métis and defuse a potentially dangerous situation.[42] By taking such a strong position on the side of the Métis, however, the priest angered Governor George Simpson. Much of that ill-feeling rebounded on Provencher as bishop, nominally in control of Belcourt.[43]

Belcourt left Red River for Quebec in 1847, with the intention of staying there, but the inhabitants of White Horse Plains petitioned the Archbishop of Quebec to send him back to them, saying that he was the only one who understood both the Indian language and English. Provencher suspected that Belcourt had changed his mind about leaving and had arranged for this petition himself. Nonetheless, he was willing to accept Belcourt again in his diocese, whatever the motivation for the request. The fact that this petition came from White Horse Plains may reflect a decline in the number of people living at Baie St. Paul, and a decision to combine that mission with St. François Xavier, to be served

Fig. 16 St. Eustache Church, n.d.
PAM N4096

by one priest. It may also indicate that the population of the two missions was more or less identical by that time.

Belcourt wrote to Simpson several times from Quebec and, to some extent, restored their former friendly relationship. Instead of returning to Baie St. Paul, however, Belcourt transferred to the diocese of Dubuque. He established a mission at Pembina and then moved it to St. Joseph, both in United States territory, apparently hoping that settlers from St. Boniface, St. Paul, and St. François Xavier would emigrate to his mission.[44] He occasionally visited his old mission of St. Paul while it existed and continued to influence events at Red River from across the border.

With his authority over the Métis, already so opposed to the monopoly of trade and so indifferent to the border, his presence there was considered a more serious threat to the HBC than when he had been at Red River. Simpson expected that some of Belcourt's Sauteux would likely follow him to his new mission[45] and could be another source of trouble for the Company. The London Committee advised Simpson to use all his means to neutralize Belcourt's influence[46] but, as Provencher had discovered, Simpson found that this was not easy to do. Belcourt was implicated in inciting the Métis over the Sayer trial of 1849;[47] his presence for part of that year at St. François Xavier added to the Company's suspicion of his involvement.[48] When the territory of Minnesota was surveyed in 1850, much damaging information was given about the HBC and the sale of liquor; Simpson claimed this came from "one especially mendacious source, Belcourt the recreant priest".[49]

After Belcourt left St. Boniface, the Baie St. Paul mission rapidly declined. In 1846-47 only twenty-six families were enumerated there.[50] In the summer of 1847 Provencher wrote, "Le village St. Paul se réduit à bien peu de choses. Les sauvages ne cultivent pas et s'occupent à chasser pour vivre et s'habiller. D'ailleurs, leur nombre n'est pas grand."[51]

Some residents of Baie St. Paul moved to join Belcourt at St. Joseph in 1848, as Simpson had expected they might, and as some of the Métis already had.[52] Other families, whether Sauteux or Métis, still remained

at Baie St. Paul at least part of the year; the Red River Census of 1849 listed eighteen families of seventy-seven people there.[53]

For some time after Belcourt's departure, a priest from St. François Xavier or from St. Boniface continued to visit the mission of St. Paul in the winter. Belcourt himself made a few visits from his mission of St. Joseph. He suspected that St. Paul would suffer a fate similar to that of Wabassimong, which had been abandoned and the buildings sold to the Methodists.[54]

In 1850 Belcourt's fears were realized. Baie St. Paul was abandoned and the buildings torn down and transported to St François Xavier.[55] The pews now in the church at St. François Xavier are said to be Belcourt's handiwork,[56] but it is not clear whether he made these specifically for St. François Xavier or whether they were brought from St. Paul. Belcourt noted bitterly:

> l'ev. de Juliop. n'a pas jugé dans sa sagesse qu'il dut rester pierre sur pierre dans aucune de mes missions. On pourrait lui demander à lui non pas combien il a fondé de missions mais combien il en a vendu et démolies.[57]

Provencher was probably more realistic than Belcourt about the costs and the benefits of St. Paul. He attributed the lack of results in the mission to Belcourt's method of using material resources as the base for a spiritual program, expecting that evangelization could only follow on "civilization", which he equated with an agricultural life. This was a method pursued by the Anglicans, with equally poor results at this stage of history with the Sauteux. Neither the Anglican missions nor that of Belcourt could be regarded as fulfilling the aims of their founders, nor could those aims be considered realistic in early nineteenth-century Red River. The Sauteux remained committed to their traditional life of hunting and fishing, with agriculture as a secondary line of subsistence. To most, Christianity also remained secondary.

By the 1860s Belcourt's old mission of Baie St. Paul had become Métis rather than Sauteux, with a population of 504 in 1872.[58] They attended

the parish of St. François Xavier, when possible, or received visits from the priest stationed there. Abbé Kavanagh went every two weeks to say Mass at Baie St. Paul in 1872.[59]

In 1874, when Kavanagh begged Taché "to reestablish divine service on a regular basis and permanently at Baie St. Paul",[60] a tentative start was made to rebuild on the site of St. Paul, with a log house, a chapel and a stable situated on Lot 205. Only 2.2 hectares of this were cultivated land.

Frequent flooding threatened the mission and its parishioners and it was almost destroyed by a flood in 1881. By 1884 the majority of the residents had relocated several miles upstream on the south side of the river. The mission buildings which were still useable were transported for use in the new parish of St. Eustache.

Notes Baie St. Paul

1. NAC MG17A22 F840 #10938. Provencher, "Notice sur les Missions de la Rivière Rouge", 1 February 1836.

2. LCSB Vol. XVII (1918), p. 313. Provencher to Lartigue, 12 July 1832. "He is a man suited for everything, who does all and does it very well. He knows the Indian language, he has composed a dictionary, and his writing on grammar is well underway...The Natives love him as their father and are ready to allow him to instruct them.

3. Ibid. Cf. Also NAC MG17A22 F840 #10937. Provencher to Propagation de la Foi, 10 July 1833.

4. NAC MG17A22 F840 #10938. "Notice sur les Missions de la Rivière Rouge", 1 February 1836.

5. AD, Belcourt to Bourget, 23 June 1835.

6. HBCA D4/58 fo. 146. Simpson to Committee, 20 June 1841.

7. HBCA E6/2 fo. 365.

8. AASB P3683. Provencher to Lartigue, 13 July 1834.

9. AD, Belcourt to Lartigue, 13 July 1834.

10. AASB Belcourt to Signay, 25 June 1835. "I can say without exaggeration that the number of catechumens exceeds 150, though they are never all together for instruction."

11. Ibid.

12. AASB P3679-84. Provencher to Lartigue, 13 July 1834. "a difficult thing, in truth, but absolutely necessary".

13. Lettres, pp. 136-40. Provencher to Signay, 16 July 1834.

14. NAC MG17A22 F840 #10938. "Notice...", 1 February 1836.

15. Lettres, pp. 136-40. Provencher to Signay, 16 July 1834. "It is not necessary to conduct missions as the Protestants do, that is to buy the Natives, but rather to win them by persuasion."

16. AASB P3681. Provencher to Lartigue, 13 July 1834.

17. SHSB. Belcourt to Prince, 23 June 1835 and Belcourt to Marcoux, 18 June 1835.

18. AASB. Belcourt to Signay, 25 June 1835. "the first step in their conversion".

19. AASB P1108-9. Provencher to Turgeon, 6 August 1838. My thanks to Corinne Tellier for help in translation of these technical terms.

20. NAC MG17A22 F840 #10938. "Notice..."

21. AASB P2889-93. Belcourt to Signay, 8 July 1836.

22. Ibid.

23. RMQ No. 6, (July 1845). Belcourt to Bishop of Quebec, 19 July 1843.

24. AASB P1106. Provencher to Turgeon, 6 August 1838.

25. AASB P3690. Provencher to Lartigue, 25 October 1834.

26. Lettres, p. 142. Provencher to Signay, 16 July 1834.

27. RMQ No. 5 (June 1843). Belcourt to Signay, 1 August 1842.

28. AASB P1792-6. Thibault to Signay, 6 July 1839.

29. NAC Notice sur les Missions du Diocèse de Québec, No. 1, January 1839.

30. RMQ No. 3 (January 1841). Belcourt to Bishop of Quebec, 4 July 1840.

31. AASB P1122. Provencher to Turgeon, 8 July 1839.

32. RMQ N0. 6, July 1845. Belcourt to Bishop of Quebec, 19 July 1843.

33. RMQ No. 3 (January 1841). Belcourt to Signay, 3 August 1840.

34. HBCA E5/10. Red River Census 1840.

35. Lettres, p. 200. Provencher to Signay, 30 June 1842.

36. HBCA E5/11. Red River census 1843.

37. AASB P1213. Provencher to Signay, 30 December 1845.

38. AASB Belcourt to Cazeau, 4 January 1842.

39. LCSB II(1903), pp. 13-14. Taché to La Broquerie, 24 June 1846.

40. RMQ No. 7 (July 1847), p. 68. Provencher to Propagation de la Foi [1846].

41. AASB P3451. Belcourt to Cazeau, 25 August 1845.

42. AASB P3825. Provencher to Bourget, 16 June 1846. James Sinclair carried this petition to Montreal to send off to London.

43. AASB P1182. Provencher to Turgeon, 10 June 1847.

44. LCSB Vol. XXXIX No. 1 (Jan. 1940)a, p. 52, Belcourt to Poiré, 31 March 1848. Also, cf. Lettres, p. 266. Provencher to Turgeon, 14 June 1848.

45. HBCA A12/4, fo. 125. Simpson to London Committee, 24 June 1848.

46. HBCA D5/25, fo. 22. Hudson Bay House to Simpson, 4 April 1849.

47. Cf. HBCA D5/25, fo. 225-6. Alexander Christie to Simpson, 29 May 1849.

48. HBCA D5/26, fo. 604-06. Major Caldwell to Simpson, 28 November 1849.

49. HBCA D4/43, fo. 79d. Simpson to Colvile, 1 May 1851.

50. PAM Red River Census 1846-7.

51. Bulletin de la Société Historique de Saint-Boniface, 1915. Provencher to Prince, 16 June 1847. "The village of St. Paul is reduced to very little. The Indians do not farm and are employed with the hunt in order to subsist and clothe themselves. Besides, their numbers are not large.

52. HBCA A12/4, fo. 125. Simpson to London, 24 June 1848. AASB Belcourt to Cazeau, 30 November 1849. BSHSB Provencher to Turgeon, 30 November 1849.

53. PAM Red River Census 1849.

54. AASB Belcourt to Cazeau, 17 June 1849.

55. AASB F0429. Betsy Fisher to her father, 24 February 1850.

56. McLeod and Morton, op. cit., p. 114.

57. AASB P3506-13. Belcourt to Cazeau, 4 July 1850. "The bishop of Juliopolis has judged in his wisdom that not a single stone should be left standing of any of my missions. One could ask him not how many missions he has founded, but how many he has sold and demolished."

58. AASB T10845. Archibald to Taché, list of Halfbreed population of parishes, 1872.

59. AD G-LPP 2229. Lestanc to Gasté and Moulin, 7 December 1872.

60. AASB T13569-71. F.X. Kavanagh to Taché, 5 January 1874.

Lake Missions

The fisheries of Manitoba's three great lakes - Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipegosis - were utilized for centuries by Native people as part of their resource base. In 1826, the flood at Red River destroyed the crops and the fall buffalo hunt failed, forcing a large number of Métis to winter at fishing sites to survive. Since the water level on Lake Winnipeg was so high, it was impossible to use the fishing sites there. Many Métis wintered at Lake Manitoba, subsisting on fish and small game.[1]

At Christmas, Mr. Destroismaisons from St. François Xavier visited this camp to preserve Church contact with them.[2] At the same time, a notice from the HBC forbidding the Métis to trade furs from the neighbouring Cree and Sauteux was read out after Mass. Lake Manitoba, although neither a mission nor a real settlement as yet, already indicated its possibilities for both, as well as the opportunities it offered for free trade despite HBC regulations. The notice had little effect and, in order to prevent the furs being sold to American traders, the HBC was forced to purchase the furs itself.[3] The Company persisted in its efforts to end this free-trading, however, and sent a "spy" to Lake Manitoba.[4] On the basis of his reports, several men were accused of breaking the law and were to be brought to trial. Provencher intervened on behalf of one of the accused, who belonged to his flock. Such close connections between Church and Métis induced a lingering suspicion among HBC personnel that Catholic missions would inevitably become nests of free-traders.

It is reasonable to assume that these Métis were then living near the present St. Laurent, a traditional stopping place along the water and land routes linking Red River to the hunting areas at the northern end of Lake Manitoba. This first visit by Destroismaisons, however, cannot be regarded as the founding of a new mission. The Métis whom he visited on

Lake Manitoba belonged to St. François Xavier or St. Boniface, and only the unusual circumstances of that year led to his trip. But his visit does display the willingness of the priests to bring the services of the Church to groups of adherents living apart from the parochial structure, which was the way in which many of the missions of St. Boniface began. Those which continued in existence developed where residence was more prolonged and consistent than it was on Lake Manitoba in 1826.

St. Norbert and St. Edouard, Duck Bay

The first sustained mission on the lakes began with the efforts of Mr. Belcourt to assemble the Sauteux at Duck Bay on Lake Winnipegosis. He had already begun his stationary mission of St. Paul but came to recognize the need for itinerant missions as well. In 1838, he sent a message to those who hunted along Lakes Manitoba and Winnipegosis that he would meet them in the fall of 1839 at Duck Bay, a traditional fall gathering-site. It was a logical place for Belcourt to choose as a rendezvous and the fall, when his Sauteux were away from St. Paul, was an opportune time for him to travel. On September 11, 1839, Belcourt, accompanied by two Métis men and a young Sauteux altar-boy, rode on horseback to Lake Manitoba and then began the water journey.

As with most such tours, Belcourt evangelized those whom he met en route. At the HBC post of Manitoba House he met the employees, who subsisted on the fish and small game of the area, because there were very few deer.[5] These spartan living conditions accounted, in part, for the frequency with which this post was closed. While there, Belcourt baptised four children, probably from the post families, but saw very few Indians.

As he continued on his journey to Duck Bay, Belcourt encountered a large camp of Sauteux on Lake **Pittowinipik** (Lake Winnipegosis). They led him to a large lodge where all the men were assembled to meet him. Their leader, an old man of about eighty, claimed that he was their priest. He told Belcourt that the priest should consider himself only as sent to the Métis and should leave the Indians alone. This was an early, and very clear, expression of a common nativistic reaction to European Christian evangelization.

Fig. 17 Map of North Western Manitoba, 1891
by Joseph B. Tyrrell
PAM Map Collection N6715

••••••• shows itinerary followed
by Belcourt and Darveau

▬▬▬▬ Darveau's route to the Pas

1 = original Duck Bay Mission
2 = Pine Creek Mission (Camperville)
3 = Partridge Crop
4 = Manitoba House

Nevertheless, Belcourt was given a hearing and allowed to present his case. In conformity with Native customs, he gave out tobacco before speaking. Much of his talk was an encouragement to good behaviour, rather than an instruction in a new belief. Afterwards, the old man told the priest that he had advocated the same thing without results; he did not expect Belcourt's words to be any more effective. Some of the men wanted no more to do with the priest but others wished further instruction. Belcourt promised to meet with those interested the following year, when he hoped to baptize their children and prepare the adults for baptism.

At Duck Bay, more Natives than he expected had gathered to hear him, some from as far away as **Coude de l'homme** (Fort Pelly). In a lodge prepared by the women for his use, Belcourt carried on continuous instruction. He baptized fifteen children on this visit and taught prayers to forty-one adults. He was so impressed by this reception that he promised to return the next year and have his men build a small chapel.

Duck Bay offered not only souls to be won, but also a good subsistence base for a mission. The surrounding marshes drew numerous migrating waterfowl in the fall and larger game could also be found in the vicinity. Most important to the native economy, however, was the fall fishery of Duck Bay. These Sauteux already grew potatoes and Belcourt hoped to further their interest in agriculture by sending them seeds of cabbage, squash, barley and wheat.

The salt springs at Duck Bay provided a well-developed economic asset for the Sauteux. Because the salt destroyed ordinary moccasins, the Sauteux wore wooden platforms under their moccasins when working with it. To extract the salt, they made reservoirs in the soil before the ice formed. Later, they collected the salt water from these and boiled out the salt. This produced up to 100 minots of salt in a winter, which could be sold in the Red River Settlement. This valuable resource, added to the products of their agriculture, hunt and fishing, enabled these Sauteux to live almost as affluent a life as that of the Plains Indians. Unlike the Plains tribes, however, the Sauteux did not practice polygamy to any great extent. This made them a better prospect for missionary activity, in Belcourt's opinion.[6]

Belcourt's report on Duck Bay was to be published in Quebec and attract financial contributions. His natural enthusiasm for his own projects was heightened by this prospect. Provencher, however, did not share Belcourt's ideas on this mission and thought the time at Duck Bay had been too short for any real mission work. Still, the Bishop planned to send Mr. Thibault to visit Duck Bay in June 1840, to continue the work initiated by Belcourt. Provencher thought the likelihood of conversions among these more isolated northern Sauteux was better than for those in closer contact with the people of the Red River Settlement. But Belcourt discouraged the Bishop from sending Thibault. Since he had promised to visit Duck Bay in the fall, he thought the Sauteux would not be there in June. Provencher cancelled Thibault's trip, only to find out later that the Indians had gathered and waited in vain for the appearance of the priest.

Belcourt did not start out for Duck Bay until September 18, 1840, very late in the season to expect to find the Sauteux still there.[7] He had spent the summer at Rainy Lake and, after his return to Baie St. Paul, was delayed because he had to build his own canoe with birch he brought back from Rainy Lake. Perhaps in reaction to accusations that the real cause of this holdup was cowardice, Belcourt insisted that he had not been held back by rumours that the Swan River Indians had threatened to kill him if he crossed their lands. According to these stories, they did not want to hear him talk about prayers and would not hesitate to shoot him when he least expected it. Belcourt offered no reason for this reaction. Whether it was based simply on religious differences or whether other fears accompanied it, the strength of these feelings may account, at least in part, for the violent death of another priest, Mr. Darveau, in 1844, in the same vicinity.

These threats made it difficult for Belcourt to find men to accompany him but he finally persuaded two young Métis to go. At Manitoba House, he stopped briefly to perform two weddings and five baptisms. A young Sauteux woman from Baie St. Paul was present and taught the prayers and catechism to the rest. Such a network of relationships between the people of various mission stations could serve the missionaries very well, by

improving their contact with each new group to be evangelized. Belcourt also visited about 200 Sauteux families, camped not far from the post. This large number had gathered for the Midewiwin ceremony, the type of native religious practice which was abhorred by the missionaries because it posed such an obstacle to the inculcation of Christianity.

Belcourt and his two men did not reach the Duck Bay rendezvous until the end of September, when the first heavy snowfall occurred. Despite the weather and the need to reach their winter hunting grounds, the Sauteux and Cree had waited ten days for Belcourt, a measure of their great interest in hearing about the new religion. Belcourt stayed a week and baptized eighteen people, heard seventy confessions, and performed one marriage. He also distributed three communions, which seems to indicate that at least some of those gathered were already Catholics. Before leaving he planted a cross on a site which, he thought, would be ideal for a small chapel. From Duck Bay Belcourt went on to visit Swan Lake, Fort Pelly and Fort Ellice, making a great circular tour from his home mission of Baie St. Paul.

Belcourt enthused about the possibilities for a mission at Duck Bay, which appeared to be a central spot for both Cree and Sauteux from many different regions. Some of the Cree in attendance at Belcourt's brief mission had told him their people from the Saskatchewan River would be glad to pray with the Catholics, if a priest would visit them. A mission station at Duck Bay could provide a missionary with access to these many different bands, while at the same time offering a sound subsistence.

As usual, Provencher did not immediately assent to Belcourt's recommendation. Instead, he sent Thibault to Duck Bay the next year to investigate the situation and present a report on which he could depend. The area of Duck Bay was not an important one for the HBC, which suggested that few Natives lived there and that no reliable economic base was present, factors as necessary to the success of fur trade posts as they were to the existence of missions. Thus Provencher had some grounds for his suspicion of Belcourt's report. He did, however, grant permission to Thibault to build a chapel or shelter, if he decided the mission really had some future.

Fig. 18 Brine Spring at Monkman's Salt Springs
Lake Winnipegosis 1889
PAM J.B. Tyrrell Coll. #16

Thibault left for Duck Bay in August, 1841, accompanied by three men, probably Métis from White Horse Plains. He spent three weeks among the Sauteux and Cree, taught them the prayers, and used Mr. Blanchet's Catholic ladder[8] to explain the Scripture and history of the faith. During this visit, Thibault performed three marriages and baptized twenty-seven people. He also supervised the construction of a small house to serve as a combination chapel and rectory at Duck Bay. This was the only building at Duck Bay at the time, since none of those who came for the fisheries or salt-making resided there all year. Thibault, to some extent at least, concurred with Belcourt's estimate of this mission, and recommended that it be continued.

In 1842, Thibault went to Edmonton and Belcourt to his new mission of Wabassimong. The task of visiting Duck Bay fell to a new missionary, Mr. Edouard Darveau, who had only arrived in St. Boniface a year earlier. Darveau had hoped to go on to the Columbia mission but had been unable to arrange transportation, and volunteered to stay as a missionary priest in St. Boniface. He spent the winter of 1841-42 studying Sauteux with Belcourt, and sharing the care of the mission of St. François Xavier. Despite his imperfect knowledge of the language, Darveau prepared for a trip to Duck Bay in May 1842.

His visit was vitally important to the continuance of this mission. Mr. Abraham Cowley, an Anglican minister, had gone to the region early in May, chosen a site near Partridge Crop, and begun to build a house, in what was to become known as Fairford Mission. He hoped to secure these natives to Protestantism, rather than leaving them to the "Popery" which, he thought, had taken considerable hold on the Indians through the previous few years of mission work by the priests. To achieve this end, the CMS intended to make this new mission the centre of an Indian village, with a school, similar to its St. Peter's mission.[9]

To counter this move by the Anglicans and to offset Darveau's inadequate knowledge of Sauteux, Provencher sent three Sauteux-speaking men along with him. They were to prepare building materials, in case a larger facility proved necessary.[10] This considerable expenditure revealed the importance Provencher attached to this trip. One of the men was educated

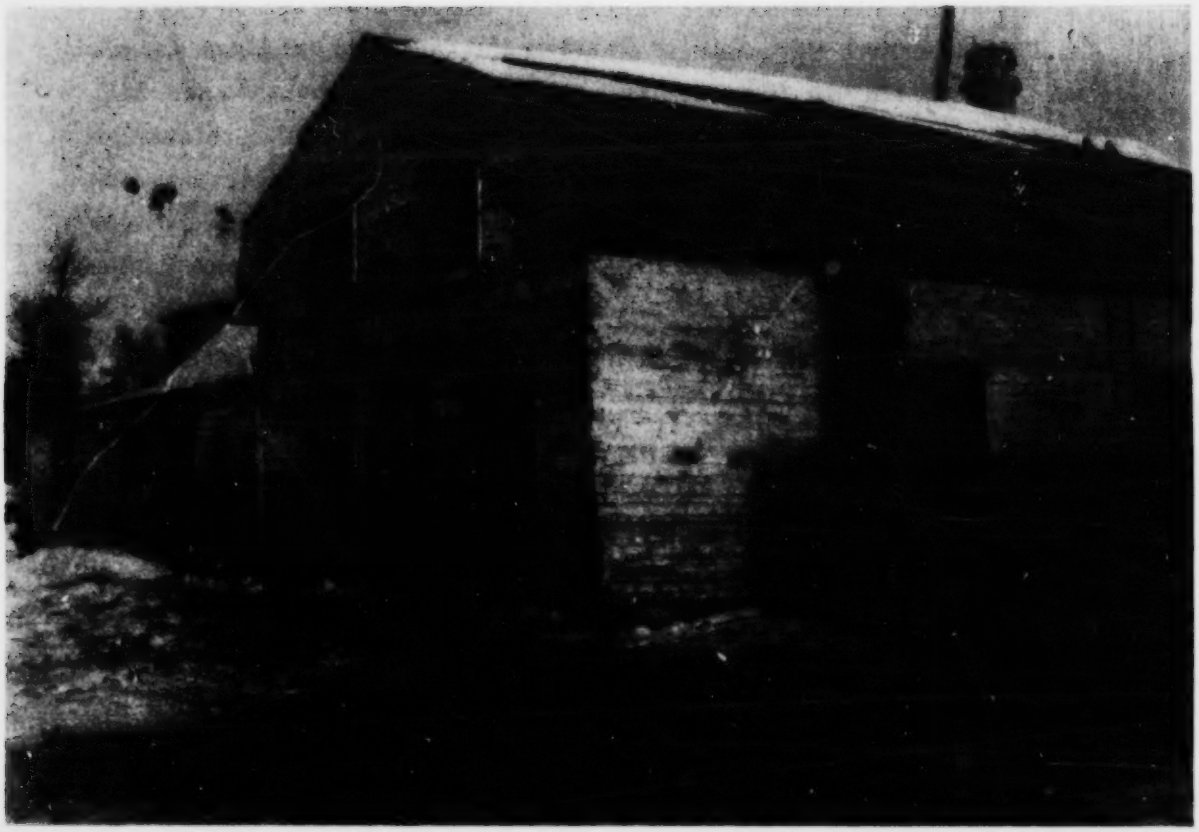


Fig. 19 Duck Bay Mission, n.d.
Archives Deschâtelets, Ottawa

enough and considered to be of sufficiently good moral character to teach catechism. This was unusual, since few laymen were considered qualified to catechize in the missions. Provencher hoped that this trip under such favourable conditions would help Darveau improve his knowledge of the language and enable him to conduct missions on his own.

Darveau soon felt the presence of his Anglican rival. The Sauteux now faced the dilemma of two Christian religions rather than one, each claiming that it alone held the truth. One of the Sauteux chiefs spoke for his people when he said "when you both agree, and travel the same road, we will travel with you; till then, however, we will adhere to our own religion."[11] Darveau blamed their reversion to Native religion on the influence of an Indian from Netley Creek,[12] however, rather than on the conflicting messages of the Anglicans and Roman Catholics.

Despite this opposition, Darveau had some success during his twenty-four days at this mission; he baptized six children and two adults.[13] Before he left, the old men, led by their chief Mizi-Epit, asked that Provencher name this Duck Bay mission St. Norbert[14] - a plea to which the Bishop willingly complied.

At the beginning of September, when more Natives were present for the fishery, the priest returned to Duck Bay. He remained there for fifteen days, instructing them more thoroughly in the faith and warning them against the "errors" of Protestantism. He continued on to Fort Pelly, where he spent a few days with Mr. Todd of the HBC, baptizing and hearing confessions in French, English, and Sauteux. Darveau then returned via Shoal River House to Duck Bay, where he remained for about six weeks, celebrating Midnight Mass and departing on December 26th for St. Boniface.[15] These activities gained the approval of Provencher, who hoped that Darveau's increasing skill with the Sauteux language would reap great benefits in this mission.

In March, 1843, Darveau set out once more for Duck Bay, where he hoped to meet a large group of Natives. Only three families were there at that time, due to the severe cold weather,[16] but the priest remained at St. Norbert until June. During that time, several groups of Sauteux and Métis came for a few days. They proved more amenable to Darveau's teachings

than they had been previously; he celebrated two marriages, baptized six, and heard many confessions. He estimated the total population of Duck Bay at the time to be about sixty.[17]

On his way back to St. Boniface, Darveau stopped at **Pine-o-notang** (Partridge Crop), where he encountered Agaskokat. The old man complained that the Anglican minister had refused to give him ammunition and had called the children an unsuitable name. Agaskokat had decided he would encourage his children to pray with Darveau. He also told the priest to come again in the fall, and he himself would probably join him in prayers.[18]

In July, Darveau started for Partridge Crop, where he had arranged to meet some of the Natives. His teaching methods had already had considerable impact; one old man feared his doctrine so much that he would not even look at the Catholic ladder, because he feared its magic power.[19] Perhaps this was a reference to Agaskokat, who may have wavered in his commitment of the previous month. Food was scarce and Darveau could only stay four days but promised that a priest would visit them again. After a brief stopover at Duck Bay, Darveau went on to **Fort Cabottawayang** (Shoal River House), where he performed one marriage and two baptisms. One of those baptized was Mizi-Epit (Joseph-Constantin), the Sauteux chief of the Duck Bay mission. Darveau's stay was brief, however, because he was on his way to the Pas.

In February, 1844, Belcourt visited the Sauteux of Partridge Crop, since Darveau had promised a priest would come. These people, who had twice previously refused to listen to Belcourt, had subsequently been visited by the minister and the priest feared this might have increased their antipathy to him. But most of the twenty families appreciated the long and arduous journey he had made and attended his teachings. Despite this polite reception, the Sauteux at this camp were divided in their attitude to the missionary. While some were inclined to believe that Belcourt's teachings had great value, old Agaskokat, who had considerable influence, affirmed that Native beliefs were as valid as Christianity, and that religion was like a double-barrelled gun, each shot carrying with the same accuracy to the same end.[20] The lack of continuity in Catholic

missionary work and the strength of opposing teachings made the hold of Catholicism on these people a very tenuous one.

Darveau spent the winter of 1843-44 at St. François Xavier and arranged to have the Chartrands build a chapel at Duck Bay. The priest left White Horse Plains on March 25, 1844, intending to visit all the northern lake missions. Darveau had a very difficult journey. He and his two men suffered from snow-blindness and could not find the portage to Lake Winnipegosis. At the Waterhen River, he was lucky enough to find an Indian to guide him across the portage but the melting snow delayed him further. Once on Lake Winnipegosis, the priest struck off on his own and became lost; he nearly died in the snow that night, with no fire and no blankets. Fortunately, his men - Baptiste Boyer and P. Chartrand - found him and brought him to Duck Bay on April fourth. Darveau left the following day to proceed to Shoal River House, where he gave Communion to three persons and baptized a baby daughter of Louis Goulet and his wife, Emmilie Wenzel.[21] His itinerary from there is somewhat uncertain but he did return to Duck Bay, before embarking for the Pas on June 4th, only to die that same day.

Mr. Laflèche, who replaced Darveau at the missions of St. Norbert, Lake Manitoba, and St. Mary's of the Pas, visited both Duck Bay and the Pas in 1845. Mizi-Epit, the chief at Duck Bay, asked Laflèche for a more regular mission but the thirty or forty families were not enough to warrant a full-time priest.[22] Laflèche tried to visit Duck Bay in March 1846 but was unable to secure dogs at Lake Manitoba and was forced to abandon this project. That summer Laflèche joined with Père Taché to inaugurate the first of the far northern missions at Ile à la Crosse.

Provencher was able, however, to send Père Bermond, one of his new French Oblates, to spend two and a half months with the Sauteux at Duck Bay in the spring of 1846. During this period he taught them prayers and catechism, preached and heard confessions. Bermond came close to starvation and left Duck Bay in May, with no inclination to return. He attempted to convince the Sauteux to gather on Lake Manitoba, which was more accessible to the missionaries from St. Boniface than was Duck Bay. Whether or not the Sauteux agreed to this proposal, Bermond relocated his

Fig. 20 Swampy Cree Camp at Shoal River 1890
PAM J.B. Tyrrell Coll. #17

mission in 1848 to the abandoned HBC post of Manitoba House.

Only fleeting visits to the people of Duck Bay were made by priests throughout the 1850s. Through the influence of the Anglican mission at Fairford a good many of the children baptized by Darveau became Protestant. Bishop Taché feared others would soon do the same unless the Catholics moved in.[23] In 1854 Taché journeyed from Ile à la Crosse to St. Boniface to assume charge of the vicariate after the death of Provencher. His travels took him to Duck Bay and its outposts - through the Pas and then across Mossy Portage to Swan Lake and Duck Bay. At the Salt Springs he baptized several children. From there, he continued to Manitoba House, Oak Point and St. Laurent, to arrive at St. Boniface on the third of November.[24] Aware from this tour of the deprivation the people of this early mission felt from lack of priestly visits, Taché asked for a volunteer priest from Quebec to restart the mission of Duck Bay. The mission had been renamed St. Edouard, in honour of Darveau, and the name St. Norbert was applied to the new Red River parish. The Bishop was unable to find a priest to serve St. Edouard at the time, however, and could not spare one of his small number of clergy to staff such a small mission.

When Henry Youle Hind visited the area in 1858, he found forty to fifty "halfbreed Indians" living there.[25] This would seem to indicate that the original Sauteux and Cree evangelized by Belcourt and Darveau had been absorbed into or replaced by Métis, but by Métis who lived a life very similar to that of the Sauteux. These people only grew a few potatoes, because their fish and game provided such abundant food.

The increased number of priests in his diocese in the 1860s enabled Taché to assign Père Simonet to renew this mission. He felt impelled to this action because the Anglicans had stationed a Mr. Kennedy to teach at Duck Bay, on the site of the old Catholic mission. The Catholics of the area sent their children to his school and attended his Sunday preaching.[26] Kennedy did not remain and Simonet spent much of the winter of 1861-62 at Duck Bay, preaching and instructing the nine Métis families who lived there, reclaiming them for Catholicism. He arranged to have a new small chapel built by the Sauteux and Métis of the mission on a different

site.[27]

Simonet described the population as a mixture of Métis, Sauteux, and some Swampy Cree. Many of these people had already been baptized by Simonet's predecessors but very few of them had been instructed enough to receive Communion. In fact, nearly half of them had abandoned their Catholic religion and renewed their Native beliefs and practices. Simonet's presence and preaching brought many of these back to Catholicism. In his first winter at Duck Bay, he also baptized about twenty who had never been Catholic, including a famous **jongleur** or Native prophet, and gave Communion to all the faithful.[28] The success of this mission seemed assured when some of the people built houses near the chapel and others, who lived beyond Swan River, said they would move to Duck Bay if the mission became permanent.[29]

Simonet returned to Duck Bay for the winter of 1862-63. His efforts of the previous year had borne some fruit, for the Natives attributed their successful summer hunt to the fact that they were praying and not drinking. Only six Indian families and eleven Métis families planned to winter at Duck Bay, however, and three other families would be within two or three miles. These families had a good many children, whom Simonet planned to teach each day. As well, he would give catechism lessons to the adults three times a week, and lead community prayers in the evenings, with hymns.[30] This prolonged instruction gave to St. Edouard's its first sign of stability since its inauguration by Belcourt more than twenty years earlier.

But Simonet was unable to maintain these lengthy stays at Duck Bay and the mission reverted once more to brief visits from priests stationed at Lake Manitoba. In 1865, Taché confirmed twenty-two catechumens at Duck Bay, perhaps the ones instructed by Simonet. This was not enough, however, to justify the re-establishment of St. Edouard as a primary mission base.

Père Camper visited Duck Bay in 1868 when the Catholics were gathered at the Salt Springs. A large number of non-Christian Indians, who had never before seen the Salt Springs, were also present. Their purpose was to make "la Grande médicine"[31] and consequently the drums sounded night and

day. A large lodge was erected and the Natives all painted their faces red. Camper spent his time baptizing the children of the Catholic Sauteux but realized that their faith was somewhat uncertain. They sometimes attended his services and sometimes those at the medicine lodge. Without the frequent presence of a priest, Camper feared their Catholic faith would disappear. But they displayed some evidence of commitment when they asked for a resident priest and offered to build a chapel for him.[32]

Taché was still unable to provide a resident priest for this small and isolated mission. By the late nineteenth century, most of the people of this old Duck Bay mission had moved south to the Pine River Reserve and its chapel of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows. There they formed a population of 232 Catholic "métis Indians".[33] Jean-Baptiste Napakisit, one of the Catholics from the early mission at Duck Bay, who had often guided Darveau, became chief of the band in 1875. He encouraged more missionary presence and the Catholic education of the children.[34] The early evangelization by Belcourt and Darveau in the Duck Bay region thus continued to affect policy many years after their initial contact.

The Pas

Northern Manitoba was of great interest as a mission field to both the Anglicans and Roman Catholics but neither was able to occupy the area in the 1820s and 1830s. In 1838, two Catholic priests - Mr. Norbert Blanchet and Mr. Modeste Demers - visited the Pas, a Cree village on the Saskatchewan River, when they were on their way to found the Columbia mission. They took the opportunity of the Sunday stopover to say Mass and preach to the Cree. They wrote Provencher that the Cree would be good prospects for mission endeavour.[35]

The Bishop was unable to follow up this lead, however, because of his chronic shortage of missionaries and because the HBC had prohibited any expansion of missions beyond the colony of Red River. The CMS appeared to pre-empt the area when Henry Budd, a Cree catechist, was sent in 1840 to minister to the Cree of the Pas. The Catholic Church, however, did not accept this conclusion. When Mr. Darveau learned in 1843 that the Anglicans planned to send an ordained missionary to the Pas, he considered

this a much more serious threat than the presence of Budd. He decided to travel to the Pas and convert the Cree to Catholicism before the minister could get there.[36]

The priest set out from Duck Bay on Lake Winnipegosis, accompanied by Pierre Chartrand, a Métis. He also hired a Swampy Cree, Cetakkwen, as guide for a month, paying him a good part of his wages in advance. They reached the Pas on August 28th and, a day later, the Cree guide decided to leave the priest's service and demanded the rest of his wages. Darveau refused to pay him or to give him provisions.[37] This enraged Cetakkwen, who threatened Darveau with reprisal.[38]

Throughout his five-week stay, Darveau faced tremendous opposition to his presence, in an area already considered a Protestant preserve by the Anglicans, the HBC, and many of the Cree. Various attempts were made to intimidate him into leaving and to prevent the children and adults from coming to his instructions. The Catholics were labelled **Windigos** and became objects of extreme suspicion. When these measures failed to drive Darveau away, the supporters of Henry Budd turned to bribery and offered gifts and promises to the Cree men and their wives.[39] Later chroniclers implicated Budd in these activities, although Darveau himself did not do so.

While there, the priest stayed in a house procured for him by Joseph Constant. Constant had moved from Michilimackinac in the Upper Great Lakes, probably as an employee of the NWC, early in the nineteenth century.[40] In 1822, as Governor George Simpson tried to rationalize the situation after the merger of the NWC with the HBC, he ordered that the freemen, including Constant, who had congregated at the Pas, Cedar Lake and Grand Rapids, should be forced to move to Red River or Montreal.[41] He feared their potential bad influence on the hunting habits of the local Indians and their probable development of illicit trade with the voyageurs in the Company boat brigades. After Constant had generously served as Simpson's guide without demanding any recompense, however, the Governor relented and agreed that he could stay at the Pas, since he had promised not to interfere with the trade in any way. Constant prospered in the north; Darveau considered his establishment comparable to a small post,

with houses and storehouses arranged in two rows, forming a small street. In front flowed the large Pas River, while on the left was the smaller Pas River.[42]

In the fifty years Constant had spent in the north, he had seen only two priests - Blanchet and Demers, on their way to Columbia - yet still regarded himself as a Catholic. This illustrates the continuity of the missions of St. Boniface with the early North West missions of New France. But the fact that two of Constant's sons were closely linked to native medicine, which Darveau labelled "the grossest superstitions", revealed the tenuous nature of that continuity and exemplified the varying mixture of Native religion with Catholic traditions over the long years away from the official teaching of the Church. Louis, one of these sons, was known as "The Cumberland Chief". He had some inclination to the CMS teachings and insisted that he had never encouraged "the French priest" to come to the Pas. According to Louis, it was his father and some of the other Cree who had given land to the priest. Louis Constant demonstrated the impact of the two competing kinds of Christianity on Native religion and leadership when he wrote: "My mind is troubled now about these different religions which I see before me and my people have nearly all left me and gone to your [CMS] religion."[43]

In the end, Darveau managed to win over one of Constant's sons, as well as several others. He baptized forty-five people during his stay and performed one marriage and one burial. His converts promised to remain true to their new faith, despite the opposition they had experienced, if Darveau would return to instruct them further. The priest agreed and said he would try to make a permanent mission at the Pas. As a symbol of this intention, he erected a cross on the proposed site of a Catholic mission,[44] and asked his catechumens to prepare wood for a chapel. Darveau also hired a fourteen-year old Swampy Cree boy, Ignace Emmanuel Odjickajaban, for a period of five years. The boy, who was probably an orphan, agreed to accompany Darveau wherever he went.[45]

Darveau was ambitious for the success of this mission. From the Pas, he expected to visit Red Deer Lake, Grand Rapids, and Cumberland House, as well as Swan River and Duck Bay. He expected that soon another priest

would be needed for the missions of this area if, as he hoped, the Swan River Natives converted to Catholicism. Darveau hoped to travel further north, where he had heard from the voyageurs that the Chipewyan were anxious to have missionaries.[46]

Darveau, accompanied by Jean Baptiste Boyer and Ignace, the Cree boy he had hired the previous year, set out from Duck Bay on June 4, 1844, intending to spend the winter at the Pas. Only a short distance from Duck Bay they were forced to camp for the night. At this spot they encountered Cetakkwen and his friend Tcimékatis. The former accused Darveau of causing the epidemic which had struck the Pas during the winter. This was a serious charge, linked to the actions of the dreaded Windigo, and called for the death of the one accused. Cetakkwen killed Boyer before he could defend himself or the priest, and then shot three or four times at Darveau, without effect. When Tcimékatis' son-in-law, Vizina, arrived, they insisted he kill the priest, before Darveau could kill them. With one shot, Vizina killed Darveau. The bodies of Darveau and Boyer were thrown into the lake to make it appear that they had drowned. Although they spared the boy's life at first, when he threatened to tell what he knew, he too was killed.[47]

Darveau's death was at first reported as an accidental drowning. He had some reputation for being careless on the water, taking chances which the Natives would not, which lent credence to the report. Governor Simpson soon heard rumours that Darveau had been murdered by a Bungee (Ojibwa) medicine-man,[48] however, and seemed convinced that they were true. Provencher discounted these stories at first, and held to the belief that Darveau had died by accident.[49] Belcourt also insisted that Darveau had not been killed by Indians.[50] Native oral tradition in the late nineteenth century maintained that Darveau had been murdered, although the accounts differed in the details.[51]

Darveau's death put all the Lake missions in jeopardy. He had been one of the most promising young missionaries, willing to pursue the itinerant methods advocated by Provencher. He had learned the Native languages to equip himself to pursue this long-neglected field. Provencher had no replacement for him but was unwilling to abandon these

missions to the Anglicans. In 1845, Mr. Laflèche went to the Pas to resume Darveau's aborted mission. While there, he built a house as a symbol of his determination to return. Provencher named the mission St. Mary,[52] an action which appeared to show commitment to its continuance.

But the following year Laflèche and Père Taché only stopped at the Pas en route to their new mission at Ile à la Crosse, where Laflèche was to be stationed instead of resuming the mission of St. Mary's. Laflèche's small community of Catholic catechumens begged him to stay with them or at least continue visiting them but he could only promise them another missionary at some future time.

From that time, the Catholics of the Pas had only brief contacts with priests travelling along the Saskatchewan River. There were several reasons for the abandonment of this mission. Provencher had decided to concentrate his missions on the northern Chipewyan. The HBC discouraged competing missions at one post and gave the Anglicans priority at the Pas. Overpowered as it was by the Anglican Devon Mission, St. Mary's had demonstrated little real success. Yet some of Darveau's converts remained Catholics and provided the basis for the renewed mission at the Pas in the 1880s.

Notre Dame du Lac

Père Bermond established the mission of Notre Dame du Lac in 1848 on a site near Manitoba House, which the HBC had abandoned in 1846 in favour of a post at Partridge Crop.[53] Situated halfway between Duck Bay and St. Boniface, this site seemed an ideal compromise between Bermond's desire to be closer to St. Boniface and the Sauteux wish to remain within their traditional areas. Bermond used material from the abandoned post to build his mission, claiming that Governor Simpson had authorized him to do so. This caused some consternation to William Todd, in charge of Partridge Crop Post, since he had no knowledge of such permission. Bermond was unable to finish his construction and spent the winter of 1848-49 in what remained of the old Manitoba House buildings. At that time, he was uncertain whether he would even be able to finish work on this mission, because the 1848 Revolution in France had affected the funds of L'Oeuvre de la

Propagation de la Foi, leaving the future of all the missions of St. Boniface uncertain.

Bermond's new mission establishment upset the Anglicans. Their mission of Partridge Crop had experienced some conflict over the years with the transitory presence of the Catholic missionaries. They viewed the establishment of a permanent Roman Catholic mission on a site so close to their own as a real threat. This perception was heightened when the HBC decided in 1849-50 to reopen Manitoba House as their Lake Manitoba post, rather than to keep the Partridge Crop post. A Catholic mission at an active post would be bound to attract the Natives whom the Fairford mission hoped to attach to the Anglican cause. These fears were allayed, however, when the Catholic mission closed soon after its opening.

Bermond was unhappy with this mission and despaired of ever converting the Sauteux. Even when Père Tissot joined him in 1849, the combination was unable to make it successful. According to Tissot, the Sauteux reasoned that, since the priests claimed to represent God on earth and God would not let his children starve, the priests should feed and clothe them. Furthermore, displaying the continued strength of Native religion, the Sauteux claimed that the English, French and Sauteux nations each had their own prayers, suitable to them, and not transferable to others.

Tissot agreed with Bermond that the mission was a waste of "money, boredom and patience"[54] - none of which he possessed to any great extent! He found the Sauteux very unlike the Indians portrayed in French mission literature, who at the sight of a priest became docile and timid, ready to convert as soon as they heard discourses on God and religion. Taché lamented the stereotypes which caused such confusion to new missionaries:

> One class of these writers, passing over too slightly the acts of cruelty, but too often perpetrated by civilized nations, represent the Indians as mere monsters under the form of humanity, who, accustomed to hunt the wild beasts, have adopted their instincts and ferocity. Others, on the contrary, surprised to find them exempt from those ambitious ideas which prevail in civilized life, imagine that they have discovered among them traces of that happiness that man enjoyed in his primitive

> state, and of which the peaceful life led by the patriarchs appears to us as a pleasing reflection. Both classes of these writers concur, by their poetic fictions, in making of these inhabitants of the woods an ideal people nowhere to be met with.[55]

In the summer of 1850 both priests left Notre Dame du Lac. Tissot went to Ile à la Crosse and Bermond to St. Boniface to become local Superior of the Oblates. When the mission was closed, the HBC bought back the building for use in the reopened Manitoba House.

The abandonment of Notre Dame du Lac resulted in the disappearance of Catholic missions in the Lake Winnipegosis and northern Lake Manitoba areas for more than a decade. The decision to abandon these missions was not an easy one for Provencher to make, but he committed his resources to the far northern missions of his diocese, which offered more prospects of success than this unhappy venture to the Sauteux.

Fourteen years later, when Père Simonet spent a couple of weeks at Manitoba House, he was much disturbed at the influence of Protestantism on the Catholic population. An old Anglican school-master had begun a school at a house belonging to one of the Catholic families and everyone sent their children to him. On Sundays he acted as a layreader and the people attended his prayers and sermons. His influence was aided by frequent visits from Mr. Stagg, the minister at Partridge Crop. Simonet tried to counter this by teaching catechism all day and into the night,[56] apparently with some success. Missions in this area continued to be intermittent, however, and it remained an out-station of the Catholic mission at the south end of Lake Manitoba.

St. Laurent (Fond du Lac)

The handful of Métis families who lived on the southeastern tip of Lake Manitoba or Fond du Lac, now known as St. Laurent and Oak Point, had frequent contact with missionaries, although none were stationed there. They lived only a little more than 48 kms from St. François Xavier; visits to and from there could be made with relative ease. Each missionary visiting the Lake missions left from Fond du Lac and spent some time with the

people there, because it was the main transfer point between the lakes and the Red River Settlement.

Most of the Métis and Sauteux spent the winter hunting and trapping in the forest and marshes to the north. Some stayed in the vicinity of Duck Bay and had contact with the priests there. In the spring they travelled down the lakes in boats, with their large families, ponies, carts, and household belongings. At Fond du Lac, where Pangman and Sayer had their houses, they landed and tented for awhile. Travelling from there by carts, they traded their furs at Fort Garry for their requirements for the buffalo hunt. After the hunt, they returned to Lake Manitoba, where they spent from two to four weeks in their tents along the shore. This was an opportunity for socialization; the time was occupied in feasts, dances, and games. Afterwards the people separated into the usual small winter hunting groups.

This site was also used by free-traders on their way to the Swan River and Cumberland Districts of the HBC. At Fond du Lac they switched from carts to boats. These free-traders threatened the well-being of Manitoba House and for a time the Company reopened an outpost at Fairford. As usual in periods of competition, liquor was traded and used to acquire furs already due to competitors. In 1851, Roderick McKenzie at Manitoba House blamed the HBC posts at White Horse Plains and Fort Garry for providing his competitors with liquor, to the detriment of trade at Manitoba House.[57] When the level of activity in the area increased, A.G.B. Bannatyne took possession in 1854 of land later registered as Lot 1 in St. Laurent.[58] By 1860 American traders had also moved in to compete with the HBC: "This place is now getting very troublesome, Yankees & people of all colors and clime beginning to disturb the repose."[59]

This activity influenced the choice of Fond du Lac as the base for the renewed missionary efforts which began in the late 1850s. Père Jean-Marie Lestanc spent the winter of 1856-57 with the few families of this area and supervised the people in squaring the timbers and raising the framework of a chapel on what is now Lot 13 in the St. Laurent Settlement.[60] He was unable to finish the work, however, because he became the first pastor of the Red River parish of St. Norbert in November 1857.

In 1858, Mr. Zéphérin Gascon moved to the mission at Fond du Lac to care for the thirty to forty white and Métis families who lived in the area.[61] These people cultivated the land, raising wheat and Indian corn, in addition to their customary hunting and trapping.[62]

Gascon resumed work on the chapel but relocated it a short distance south to Lot 2, much closer to the homes of the few resident families,[63] and nearer the small bay which served as a harbour. The chapel was a squared log structure chinked with mud and covered by a thatched roof held down by sod. Gascon divided this chapel into two parts, one section to be used as his residence. The floors of the building were of planks, sawn by the local people. The chapel had a roughly-made altar and benches which stood against the walls when not in use. At one end hung a picture of heaven and hell which Gascon used in his catechism lessons. The furnishings in the residence were equally sparse. Each section was heated by a small Carron stove. After Gascon left in 1859 an addition to the chapel was made on the south end.[64]

During his brief time at this mission, Gascon spent much of his time ministering also to the groups of Métis or Sauteux who passed through Fond du Lac. Instead of continuing as a secular priest, Gascon decided to join the Oblate Congregation, and began his novitiate at St. Norbert in March 1859.

His departure left Lake Manitoba without a resident priest. Taché attempted to renew these early missions by sending Père Lestanc to Lake Manitoba in 1861 to conduct the Easter services, which were attended by over fifty people. Because Lestanc knew only a few words of Sauteux, Taché wrote out an examination of conscience for use in the confessional. Lestanc spent two months at Fond du Lac on this occasion, preaching and attempting to expand his limited Sauteux vocabulary. Before this could be achieved, however, he was recalled to St. Boniface to administer the diocese once more, while Taché went to Quebec to raise funds for rebuilding the cathedral, which had been destroyed by fire in November 1860.[65]

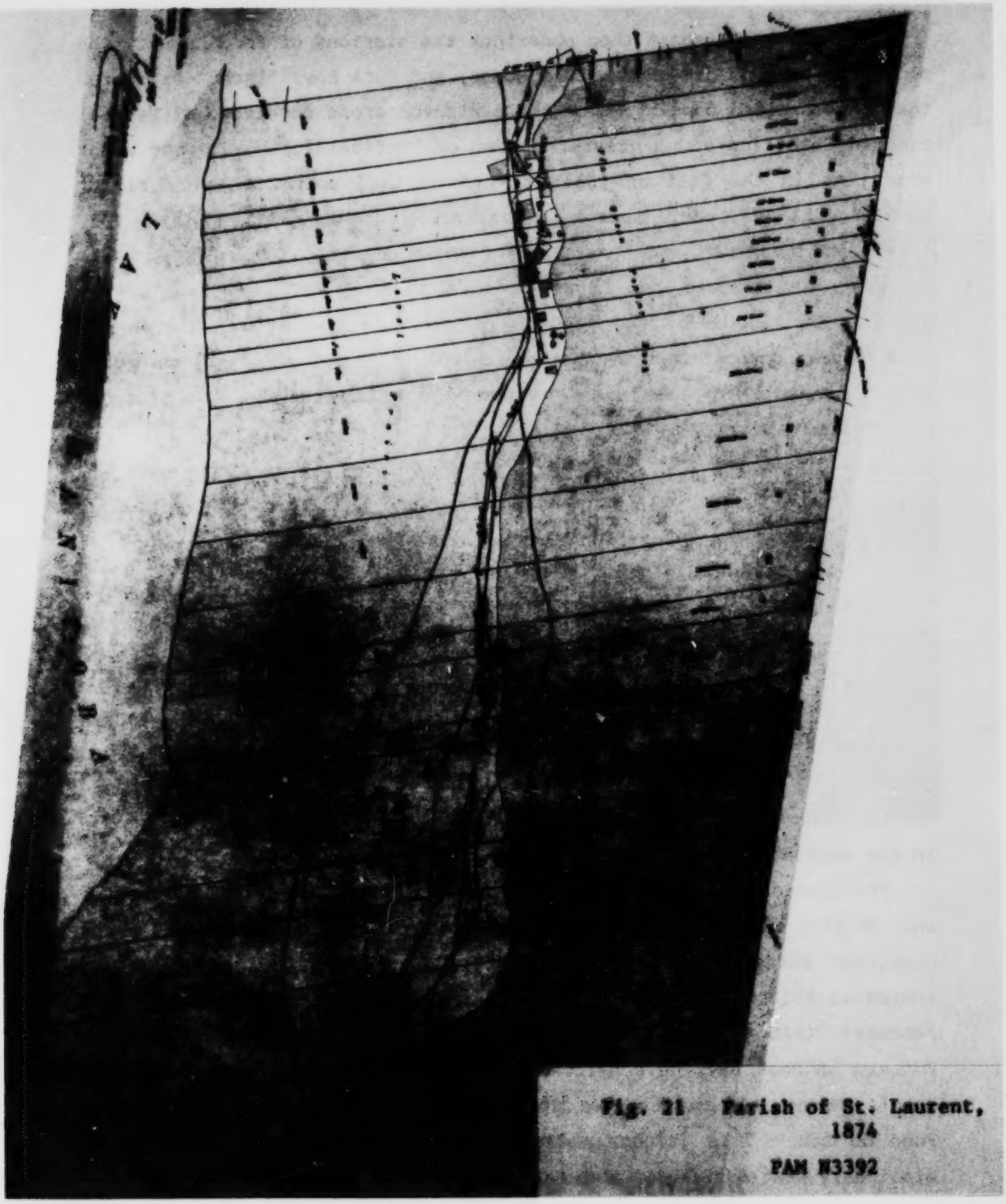


Fig. 21 Parish of St. Laurent, 1874

PAM N3392

Père Laurent Simonet then undertook the missions of Fond du Lac, the old Notre Dame du Lac at Manitoba House, and Duck Bay. Taché estimated that the combined population of these mission areas consisted of several hundred Catholics and a greater number of "infidels".[66] Simonet spent some time in the fall of 1861 at Fond du Lac, using his very slight knowledge of the Cree language to teach catechism and school.[67] By this time, Fond du Lac Mission included several adherents at Oak Point, where a number of families had begun to move in the 1850s in the hope of avoiding the floods which plagued the old Red River parishes.[68] Taché had gone to say Sunday Mass for the people of Oak Point in May, 1861, the first time this had been done. He hoped to solidify the Church's presence by building a chapel there.

Over the winter of 1863 Père Simonet had the chapel at Fond du Lac disassembled and carried north to what is now Lot 20, St. Laurent.[69] This move was necessitated by a shift in the population. The building remained without floors for several years. By the late 1860s it was in such a decrepit condition that only the cross over the door distinguished it from the other buildings of the settlement.[70]

In 1864 Simonet spent some time at Fort Alexander on Lake Winnipeg and then accompanied the Métis on the buffalo hunt in June. On his return, he based himself at Fond du Lac, where he spent the winter in a house belonging to a Métis who was wintering at Manitoba House. He instructed the children during the day and taught school to the men and young people in the evening.

The mission, still known only as Lake Manitoba, seemed to be a success and in 1864 Père Simonet became its first resident missionary. Taché confirmed forty people there that year,[71] a significant sign of its increased stability. Taché visited the rest of the Lake missions in February, 1865 as he returned from a visit to Ile à la Crosse. At St. Edouard on Duck Bay, he confirmed twenty-two catechumens. He continued on his journey and spent a few days at Manitoba House, before going on to Fond du Lac. This itinerary displayed the existence of the chain of missionary stations along Lakes Manitoba and Winnipegosis derived from the early efforts of Belcourt and Darveau which had continued to survive

Fig. 22 Roman Catholic Church at St. Laurent, Man., 1897
Photo by J.B. Tyrrell
NAC Geological Survey of Canada Collection

through years of intermittent missionary presence. The centre for this work had shifted south, however, from the old Duck Bay nucleus to the newer mission at Fond du Lac, now named St. Laurent, in honour of Simonet's patron saint.

Education

The priests who visited the Lake Manitoba missions and stayed for any length of time in one place used some of their time to teach basic reading skills to the children, as well as catechism classes for both children and adults. Simonet was glad to have the help of Frère St. Germain in 1865, who assisted him in teaching school and catechism every day at St. Laurent.[72] Although these classes gave some educational skills to the students, the frequent interruptions prevented any solid scholastic achievements.

In 1870 a small extension was added to the rectory to serve as a school, where Brother Mulvihill taught about twenty-five students, beginning in September. This school was soon recognized and funded by the Province of Manitoba and came under the jurisdiction of the Superintendent of Catholic Schools. When Superintendent Joseph Royal made his first inspection of this school in 1871, twenty-two boys and seventeen girls were enroled. Royal found some of the pupils quite advanced, due to their early education from the priests. The language of instruction posed some difficulties, however, since the children spoke Cree or Sauteux at home and used French only at school.[73]

In the later 1860s, St. Laurent assumed a more permanent appearance. Père Joseph Camper joined Simonet in 1866 and, the following year, Brother Jeremias Mulvihill augmented the staff. In 1866, the congregation consisted of only thirteen Catholic families at St. Laurent and another ten at Oak Point. When starvation threatened all the Red River district in 1868, however, the population of the Lake Manitoba mission swelled rapidly as the Métis moved there to take advantage of the fisheries;[74] in that year, thirty-four families lived at St. Laurent.[75] In 1872, the Métis

Fig. 23 Oblate Novitiate, St. Laurent, 1925
Archives Deschâtelets, Ottawa

population of Lake Manitoba parish was listed as 275.[76]

This increased population made it easier for the Oblates to build up their base at St. Laurent. Although Simonet left the station in 1870, Père Camper and Brother Mulvihill worked together in the Lake missions for the rest of their lives. Under their care, St. Laurent became an important regional headquarters for the Oblates of Manitoba. In the early twentieth century, many future Oblates were trained at the novitiate in St. Laurent.

As the Indian treaties were signed and the Cree and Sauteux moved to reserves, a number of mission stations were formed on these reserves around the lakes. The priests visited Ebb and Flow, Crane River, Waterhen River, Duck Bay, Swan Lake, and the mouth of the Shoal River at Dawson Bay. The town of Camperville, named after the priest, developed at the site of the Pine River mission, and a large residential school was built there. All of these sites had been visited by Belcourt and Darveau in the early 1840s, as part of the first itinerant missions from St. Boniface. Their permanence in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries demonstrated the value to the Church of those first long journeys, in canoes or on snowshoes, made by these Quebec priests as they sought to evangelize the Natives of the Lakes district of Manitoba.

Notes Lake Missions

1. HBCA B235/a/8 fo. 6, 23 September 1826.

2. Lettres, pp. 115-117. Provencher to Panet, 31 January 1827.

3. HBCA B235/a/8 fo. 14. 7 January 1827.

4. Ibid, fo. 19-20, 12 March 1827 to 15 March 1827.

5. AASB P3018-52. Belcourt to Signay, 9 November 1840.

6. RMQ No. 3 (January 1841). Belcourt to Bishop of Quebec, 9 November 1839.

7. The details of Belcourt's trip are given in RMQ No. 4 (Jan. 1842). Belcourt to Signay, 9 November 1840.

8. The Catholic ladder was a chart of the events in faith history from creation to the present. The chronology was given by ascending dots and pictures of important events beside the relevant dots. Mr. Blanchet devised this to instruct the Indians of Oregon, whose many different languages made it impossible for the missionary to communicate with them in words. Father Lacombe later revised this and it is usually known as Lacombe's ladder.

9. CMS A78. Wm. Cochrane to Secretaries, 9 August 1842. Cf. also M. Payne, "Fairford Mission", unpublished HRB report, n.d.

10. RMQ No. 5 (June 1843). Extract of letter of Provencher to Bishop of Quebec, 30 June 1842.

11. A. Ross, The Red River Settlement, Reprint, Minneapolis: Ross & Haines Inc., 1957), p. 292. Cf. also A.G. Morice, OMI, History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada, (Toronto: The Musson Book Co. Ltd., 1910), pp. 161-62.

12. SHSB 207/5. Darveau to Bishop of Quebec, 22 June 1843.

13. RMQ No. 5 (June 1843), p. 4. Provencher to Bishop of Quebec, 22 July 1842.

14. SHSB 207/5. Darveau to Bishop of Quebec, 22 June 1843.

15. SHSB 207/5. Darveau to Bishop of Quebec, 22 June 1843.

16. RMQ No. 6, July 1845. Darveau to a priest of Montreal, 7 December 1843.

17. SHSB 207/5. Darveau to Bishop of Quebec, 22 June 1843.

18. AASB P0700. Darveau, Voyage de 1843, 11 June 1843.

19. RMQ No. 6, July 1845. Darveau to a priest of Montreal, 7 December 1843.

20. RMQ No. 6 (July 1845), pp. 101-105.

21. AASB P0821-24. Darveau to "cher ami & confrère" [Mayrand], dated at Cabottawayang, 7 April 1844.

22. LCSB XXVI (1927) p. 177. "Notice sur la Rivière Rouge", 1843.

23. AASB Ta3521. Taché to Archbishop of Quebec, 13 November 1854.

24. LCSB Vol. XLI (Jan. 1942), "Entretiens de Monseigneur Tache", pp. 41-42.

25. Parliament of Canada, op. cit.

26. AASB T1112-5. Simonet to Taché, 13 January 1862.

27. AD HE2221.T12 Z146. Lestanc to Taché, 29 December 1861.

28. AASB T1806-9. Lestanc to Taché, 17 February 1862.

29. Ibid.

30. AD HE2221.T12 Z225. Simonet to Taché, 19 October 1862.

31. LCSB Vol. XXXV (April 1936), p. 108. Camper to Taché, 12 September 1868.

32. LCSB Vol. XXXV (April 1936), p. 109. Camper to Taché, 12 September 1868.

33. Th. Ortolan, OMI. Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée, Vol. 4. Paris: Librairie Saint-Paul, 1914, p. 106.

34. Missions 1893. Rapport, St. Boniface, pp. 338-9.

35. LCSB Vol. XXXVII Nos. 9 & 10 (Sept.-Oct. 1938), p. 228. Itinerary of trip of Blanchet and Demers to Oregon, 5 August 1838.

36. SHSB Darveau Dossier, A.G. Morice, "M. Darveau, martyr du Manitoba"

37. AASB P0756-0757. Darveau, Voyage d'automne à St. Norbert, 1843.

38. The information on Darveau's trips to the Pas is contained in notes compiled from Native oral history accounts by Père Camper some twenty years later. Camper calls him Chetakone, but I have used Darveau's spelling of the name.

39. RMQ No. 3 (July 1845). Darveau to a priest of Montreal, 7 December 1843.

40. Ibid.

41. HBCA D4/1 fo. 25-26. Simpson to Alexander Kennedy 29 January 1822 and fo. 26d, 7 September 1822.

42. AASB P0756. Darveau, Voyage d'automne à St. Norbert, 1843.

43. CMS A78. Louis Constant to Rev. J. Smithurst, 16 June 1844. Cf. also H. Budd to Smithurst, 2 January 1844.

44. RMQ No.3 (July 1845). Darveau to a priest of Montreal, 7 December 1843. Cf. also S. Tucker, Rainbow of the North, p. 154.

45. AASB P0813. Darveau to Provencher, 18 March 1844.

46. Ibid.

47. AASB "Mort de Monsieur Darveau, ptre." Mémoire du Rev. J. Camper, OMI.

48. HBCA D4/35, fo. 24d-25. Simpson to Provencher, 6 July 1846.

49. HBCA D5/18 fo. 21. Provencher to Simpson, 7 July 1846.

50. AASB P3453. Belcourt to Cazeau, 25 August 1845.

51. AASB L6594-5. Divers témoignages au sujet de la mort tragique du regretté Monsieur Darveau.

52. NAC MG17A22 F840 #10951. Provencher to Propagation de la Foi, 25 July 1845.

53. M. Payne, op. cit.

54. AD G-LPP 2957. Tissot to Mazenod, 25 May 1850.

55. Annals of the Propagation of the Faith Vol. 13 (1852), pp. 249-50. Taché to his mother, 4 January 1851.

56. AASB T2586-9. Simonet to Taché, 18 January 1864.

57. HBCA D5/44, fo. 388. Roderick McKenzie to Simpson, 30 September 1851.

58. PAM RG17C1 #523. Field Survey Notebook, Wm. Wagner, 4 February 1874.

59. HBCA D5/52, fo. 100-103. Rod. McKenzie to Simpson, 26 May 1860.

60. SHSB. Mulvihill, "Historical notes on the mission of St. Laurent, Man.".

61. LCSB XXXIX (1940), p. 303. Taché to Dawson, 7 February 1859.

62. Parliament of Canada, op. cit.,(1859), p. 7. 4 July 1858.

63. SHSB. Mulvihill, op. cit.

64. AASB T10826-9. Camper to Taché, 25 August 1872.

65. LCSB XI (1912), pp. 119-23. "Feu le R.P. Joseph-Jean Marie Lestanc, OMI".

66. Taché, Vingt Années, p. 155.

67. AD HE2221.T12 Z222. Simonet to Taché, 26 September 1861.

68. Nor'Wester 1 June 1861.

69. AD HEB2195.J83 L8. Camper to Martinet, 12 April 1876.

70. Ibid.

71. Benôit, op. cit., p. 488.

72. AASB T3645-8. Simonet to Taché, 17 November 1865.

73. Rapport, Surintendant des Ecoles Catholiques, 1871.

74. Cf. LCSB XXXV (1926), Camper to Taché, 12 September 1868, and LCSB XXXVI (1937), Simonet to Taché, 15 October, 20 October, 15 December, 29 December 1868.

75. Giraud, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 350 n.124.

76. AASB T10845. Archibald to Taché, 1872.

Lac Caribou

This mission originated in August, 1846 when the two young priests, Père Alexandre Taché, OMI, and Mr. Louis Richer Laflèche, arrived at Frog Portage en route to their mission station at Ile à la Crosse. Frog Portage was the junction where goods were transferred from the HBC Ile à la Crosse boat brigade to the boats for Deer's Lake Post, situated at the mouth of the Reindeer River on Lac Caribou (Reindeer Lake).[1] Charles Thomas, the clerk in charge of Deer's Lake, kept a small house at Frog Portage where, accompanied by some of the Cree and Chipewyan attached to his post, he waited for the boat brigade to bring his supplies.[2]

While the transfer went on, Taché and Laflèche carried on religious services for the boat crews, Cree, and Chipewyan.[3] Rendezvous of various boat brigades were only too often centres for the spread of epidemic diseases and many of those at the portage at this time were suffering from measles, which caused several deaths. Probably for this reason, eighteen baptisms were registered for the mission of Lac Caribou during this short period.[4] It was customary for missionaries to baptize those in immediate danger of death, even if they were uninstructed in the faith. Although Thomas was not a Catholic, one of those baptized was his daughter. The priests also performed two marriage services.

The Chipewyan, eager to hear more of this new religion, asked the priests to come to Deer's Lake Post to instruct them further. Unable to do so at the time, the priests asked Chief Factor Roderick McKenzie at Ile à la Crosse about a future visit; McKenzie proved very supportive of this project. His invitation to the Catholic missionary, Mr. Thibault, to visit Ile à la Crosse in 1845 had been motivated by his attempt to counter the attraction to the Plains life which drew the Cree, living on the fringes of the prairies, in the south part of his large district, to abandon trapping for the Company in favour of the Plains buffalo hunt. The

caribou hunt on the Barrens was an equal inducement to the Chipewyan living to the north of Ile à la Crosse. Those who lived near the south end of Lac Caribou trapped furs for the Company and were dependent to some extent on trade goods, although they also hunted caribou. These "Woods Chipewyan" had probably moved to a more southerly location in the boreal forest to take advantage of fur-trade opportunities.[5] Their close relatives, the Caribou-Eater Chipewyan from the north end of the lake, still acquired almost all they needed from the caribou. This gave them an independence of the fur trade similar to that conferred on the Plains Indians by the buffalo. Both sections of the Chipewyan had traded at Churchill in the past. McKenzie hoped that the influence of the priests at Lac Caribou would persuade these Chipewyan to trap more furs and trade more frequently at the posts in his district.

With the approval and assistance of McKenzie, Taché prepared to visit Deer's Lake Post in March, 1847. This was only a few months after his arrival at Ile à la Crosse, when he had acquired only a very slight knowledge of the Chipewyan language. Samuel McKenzie, Roderick's son, guided Taché as far as his post at Rapid River. From there, men sent by Charles Thomas took Taché the rest of the way to Deer's Lake Post. Despite this assistance from the HBC, Taché experienced many privations on this trip, the first of many such in his missionary career.[6] Though Bishop Provencher had at first been dismayed by Taché's lack of maturity, such trips proved the need for youth and vigour in the northern missions of St. Boniface.

Taché arrived at Deer's Lake Post on March 25, 1847. This isolated and relatively inaccessible post had only a small trade and a minimal staff, consisting of Charles Thomas and his family, two servants with their families, and an Indian and his family. Although only one servant and his family were Catholics, Charles Thomas did all he could to be hospitable to Taché. He gave the priest the better of his two rooms and had a table and chair built especially for Taché, a luxury he himself had apparently done without.[7]

Soon the Cree and Chipewyan attached to the post, totalling about forty families, began to arrive. The Cree, who had had some exposure to

CMS mission teaching, proved unreceptive to Taché, but the Chipewyan were eager to hear of his religion. Taché used his smattering of each language to preach but often mixed up the two, compounding the confusion for his listeners. At other times Charles Thomas, who could speak Cree and some French, acted as interpreter to one of the Chipewyan who knew a little Cree. A good deal was lost (or perhaps added!) in the translation from French Catholic theology through English Protestant to Cree non-Christian and then to Chipewyan non-Christian. Despite his difficulties, Taché gave instruction in the Catholic faith from morning to night during the two months he spent at Deer's Lake Post. The forty-nine baptisms he performed evidenced some considerable success for his efforts. Naming the mission after St. Peter was a further sign of the high hopes Taché had for this locality, where the Chipewyan showed such great zeal for Christianity.

The priest promised to return the following year to carry on with the evangelization process. On their part, the Chipewyan agreed to gather in larger numbers for his arrival and to invite their northern relatives, the Caribou-Eaters, to come. This decision accorded well with both Taché's hopes and with those of Roderick McKenzie in authorizing this mission.

When Taché arrived at Deer's Lake post in March, 1848, his legs were sore for several weeks from his laborious travelling through heavy snow. He waited three weeks at the post before the Chipewyan appeared but was well-rewarded for his time. They showed up in large numbers, as they had promised, and were accompanied by an equal number of the Caribou-Eaters from Churchill. This was a welcome sign to Charles Thomas because the larger numbers of Chipewyan meant an increased trade at his post. Their visit to Deer's Lake Post instead of to Churchill, however, inaugurated a lengthy series of recriminations from those in charge of Churchill, who complained that the attractions of missions at inland posts depleted their normal trade.[8]

The Caribou-Eaters had not come to Deer's Lake primarily to trade but were drawn to the post by the presence of the priest. Some were motivated by simple curiosity. Others, distressed by an epidemic which had caused several deaths among them during the winter,[9] sought "good medicine" from

Fig. 24 Portion of Map of Dominion of Canada
by James White [1905]
HBCA Map Collection G.3/409
HBCA PAM

1 = Frog Portage or Portage Fort de Traite
2 = Rapid River
3 = Deer's Lake Post

Taché. The Chipewyan valued those with the great spiritual powers the priests claimed to have. Native religion was not exclusive but willing to incorporate new religious customs with traditional ones. It was natural for the Chipewyan to expect some assistance from Taché and to hope that his actions and prayers would appease the spirits afflicting them with sickness. Yet Taché was bound to interpret their interest as a willingness to convert to Roman Catholicism, a faith which considered all others as heresies or paganism. The misunderstandings which resulted from these two opposing traditions and from each group's ignorance of the other's outlook continued to affect the missions of the Church for many years, especially in areas such as Lac Caribou where the priests had only brief and sporadic contacts with the Chipewyan.

Without a house large enough to accommodate this crowd, Taché could only visit the Chipewyan in their lodges to instruct them. Although he communicated somewhat better with his improved linguistic skills, the lack of sufficient space meant that he could not instruct all of them at any one time. This considerably hampered his efforts. His instructions were cut short because the Chipewyan could not stay long at Deer's Lake; the vicinity of the post provided little in the way of local provisions for such a number of visitors.

During this mission, Taché added seventy-one baptisms, mostly children, to the register, and hoped to secure more adherents on future visits. Both he and the Chipewyan wanted a permanent mission, but Deer's Lake Post was unsuitable for large gatherings for any length of time. A good fishery was essential before even a temporary community could develop at any northern post or mission. The Chipewyan suggested that the northern end of the lake offered superior sites for a permanent mission. The fishing was much better and the caribou nearer; these resources would make it possible for them to stay longer to hear instructions. Taché accepted this advice and agreed to meet guides sent by the Chipewyan the following spring at Deer's Lake Post, and would go with the guides to inspect the proposed sites at the north end of the lake.

At the end of May, 1849, Taché left Ile à la Crosse, intending to meet the Chipewyan guides as promised. At Rapid River, however, one of his

Fig. 25 Dog carriole Brochet Post Reindeer Lake
Photo by James McDougall, January 2, 1894
HBCA Photograph Collection, 1987/13-237
HBCA PAM

guides became sick and he could not hire a replacement. Then Charles Thomas arrived with the news that the Chipewyan guides had not come to Deer's Lake Post. Those Chipewyan who accompanied Thomas told Taché that their northern relatives had suffered from a shortage of food throughout the winter, which left them unable to meet him as planned. In these circumstances, the proposed trip to Lac Caribou appeared pointless.

But Taché knew the Chipewyan relied on his promise to meet them. He feared the distrust that would follow if he broke his commitment; the whole future of his mission work with them would be jeopardized if they gathered as agreed and he did not appear. In spite of all the hazards that would ensue from lack of a suitable guide, he hoped to make the trip, but Mr. Laflèche persuaded him against it. Taché returned to Ile à la Crosse, uneasy and afraid that he had not done all that could have been done for this mission. The few contacts he made that year added only seven baptisms to the mission register.

Taché later discovered that the Chipewyan had gathered to meet him at the north end of the lake and, although they had not sent guides for him, resented his non-appearance. In reprisal, they asked the CMS missionary at Lac La Ronge to visit them. When Taché heard of this, it added to his burden of guilt. The CMS, however, was also unable to begin a mission station on Lac Caribou. For the time being, those Chipewyan interested in the Christian religion, whether Anglican or Roman Catholic, had to travel to mission stations outside their own territories.

In 1850, Taché was in charge of Ile à la Crosse and could not undertake any long journeys to visit the Chipewyan. In an attempt to remedy the situation, he asked Charles Thomas to let the Deer's Lake Chipewyan know he would meet them at Frog Portage. Very few turned up and only twenty-three were baptized that year. Taché assured these Chipewyan that a missionary would visit the north end of Lac Caribou in the summer of 1851. Once such a visit was promised, it was vital that it be fulfilled.

Taché was unable to go to Lac Caribou in 1851, because he had been selected as auxiliary bishop to Provencher and was on his way to France to be consecrated by the founder of the Oblates, Eugène de Mazenod, Bishop of Marseilles. In his place, he sent Père Augustin Maisonneuve, who had

spent a year at Ile à la Crosse, during which he had learned a little Chipewyan. Taché and Maisonneuve travelled together as far as Frog Portage, where they met Nanedi, the Chipewyan who was to guide Maisonneuve to the north end of Lac Caribou.[10]

When Nanedi and Maisonneuve reached Deer's Lake Post, however, Nanedi claimed that the priest had insufficient supplies and refused to guide him any farther. The poverty of the missionaries posed a great danger on such a long journey, in a country which might provide very little food. Maisonneuve had difficulty finding another guide but, determined to go on, he hired Enettueyaze dit Castor. Although less-qualified than Nanedi, Castor demanded more compensation. Maisonneuve had no option but to pay, for he was well aware of the importance Taché attached to this visit.

The journey to the north end of the lake took fifteen days, due to ice on the lake, which forced them to follow the coastline. To conserve their few provisions, they depended on fish, which at the time were scarce and poor in quality. From this experience, Maisonneuve judged the fishing in the lake to be poor from one end to the other. Waterfowl too were scarce. Consequently, Maisonneuve and his guide were often hungry.

When he reached the two sites suggested for a permanent mission, Maisonneuve decided they were not suitable. At one location the fishing was too poor, the soil inadequate for gardening, and the forest had been wiped out by fire. At the second site, which was probably Lac du Brochet, there was enough wood for fuel but none suitable for building material. His guide could offer no alternatives to these sites. Since Maisonneuve saw no Chipewyan at these sites, the prospects for a mission station appeared bleak.

Maisonneuve cut short his visit and returned to Deer's Lake Post with his guide. From there he went on to Frog Portage, where he was fortunate enough to contact the Red River boat brigades, captained by L'Esperance and Bruce. They provided him with food for his trip back to Ile à la Crosse. After two months of difficult travel and near-starvation, Maisonneuve had contacted only three Chipewyan families at three different places and baptized a total of twelve.

His pessimistic report convinced Taché that no mission could be set

up at the north end of Lac Caribou. The limited financial resources of the Catholic missionaries could not overcome the difficulties of a place with no wood for construction, no cultivable land, no hay to feed cattle, and no fish to feed the missionary himself. Throughout the 1850s the mission of St. Pierre, Lac Caribou, remained alive only through occasional contacts at Frog Portage or Deer's Lake Post. Between 1852 and 1859, only one baptism was registered for the mission.

Foundation at Lac du Brochet

In 1859, however, the whole situation changed when Chief Trader George Deschambeault, in charge of Ile à la Crosse, decided to open a provision post at the north end of Lac Caribou.[11] The primary aim of a provision post was to trade for meat and caribou pemmican (provisions) for the HBC boat brigades and posts, rather than to trade in furs. A location near the Caribou-Eater Chipewyan, who lived almost entirely from the caribou and did little trapping, was ideal for such a purpose and suited the needs of both the Chipewyan and the HBC. In the months of November and December they brought in both green and dried caribou meat, which the HBC purchased to provide food for its boat brigades and posts. Until the advent of railways, the Company's dependence on this supply of food was great and the Chipewyan were able to maintain a high degree of independence of the trade.[12] Because most of their food and clothing came from the caribou, the Caribou-Eater Chipewyan needed little from the HBC except guns, ammunition and a few luxuries such as tea. For these reasons, a provision post did not need to carry as much merchandise as a fur-trade post. This was beneficial to the Company, since Lac du Brochet was far off the usual transport routes.

Deschambeault sent Pierre Morin, a Catholic Métis well-known to the priests of Ile à la Crosse, to take charge of this new post,[13] which was situated on the shore of a large inlet of Lac Caribou named Lac du Brochet. The establishment of this HBC post revived the project of a Catholic mission on Lac Caribou. If the post continued, the subsistence of a mission station would be more secure and the cost of transportation of goods would be greatly reduced. The presence of Métis Catholic

servants of the HBC at the new post was a further incentive to establish a mission.

On his way to France in 1859 to be consecrated auxiliary bishop, Grandin had encountered some of the Lac Caribou Chipewyan on their way to see Mr. Hunt, the CMS missionary. They assured Grandin they would pray with the Catholics if the priests would only come and instruct them; in the meantime, however, they could not live without prayer and would go to Hunt's mission.[14] Such statements roused the zeal of both Grandin and Taché to ensure that the conversion process begun by Taché so many years before did not fall by default to the Anglicans.

This competitive spirit was heightened when Mr. Hunt went to Deer's Lake Post in 1859 to choose a site for a mission, to which the CMS intended to assign Rev. Mr. Smith in the spring of 1861. The priests heard rumours that another minister would go to Lac la Hache (Wollaston Lake), which was near to numerous Chipewyan and to good communication routes.[15] Because of this preemption by the Anglicans, Hunt claimed that the Catholics had no right to begin a mission on Lac Caribou. But these CMS intentions gave even more incentive to the Catholic bishops to commit their Church to a renewed mission there.

Grandin sent Père Vegreville to Lac Caribou in June, 1860, with instructions to look into the possibilities of establishing a Catholic mission at Lac du Brochet. Taché had maintained his keen interest in the Lac Caribou mission and wrote that success in this effort would lift an enormous weight from his heart.[16] When Vegreville arrived at Deer's Lake Post on June 17, 1860, however, he met Pierre Morin, who told him the Chipewyan of the north end of the lake had already left for the hunt and it was useless to go there. Vegreville gave up his plan to go north and stayed at Deer's Lake Post, where he contacted about twelve families, totalling about twenty people. He baptized fifteen children and one adult, apparently almost all of those present. Many of these people had previously been baptized by Mr. Hunt, who protested vigorously against Vegreville's rebaptism.[17]

After this brief contact at Deer's Lake, Vegreville urged Taché to establish a mission at the north end of Lac Caribou, where he had asked

Pierre Morin to build a shelter for the priests. Morin had told him that 133 hunters had visited Lac du Brochet during the winter of 1859, while another forty had sent in their provisions.[18] This indicated a sound population base for a successful mission.

This evaluation of the north end of Lac Caribou was in direct contradiction to all previous reports but Vegreville was anxious to establish the mission, and hopeful of becoming bishop of this area.[19] When Taché and Grandin met at Ile à la Crosse in the fall of 1860, both agreed on the importance of this foundation. They sent Vegreville in November to attempt once more to visit Lac du Brochet and to investigate the possibilities for a permanent mission there.

Vegreville arrived at Brochet December 31, 1860.[20] The Chipewyan began arriving in mid-January, in small groups of three or four men, who only stayed a few days at the post. The largest group was composed of six men, four of them with their families, for a total of twenty-seven people. In all, Vegreville saw about 125 people at the post. A few of them had been baptized by Taché in 1848, which demonstrated the continuity of this renewed mission with its early adherents. Because of the lack of contact through the 1850s, however, half of them had never seen a priest. Some had become Protestants, while the rest adhered to their own religion.

Despite the brevity of his contact and the mixtures of religions among the Chipewyan, Vegreville claimed he could understand what they thought, give them the rudiments of religion, and hear a kind of confession from them. His work was made easier since about one-quarter of the men already knew how to read and many knew how to make the Sign of the Cross. He baptized ten children at the post. According to him, the Chipewyan were delighted to see a priest in their territories and promised they would adhere to Catholicism if a mission was established.

Vegreville stayed a couple of months in the area, visiting the Chipewyan in their camps. One of those he visited was the chief of the Caribou-Eaters, Catjedeyaze (the little chief), who had been attached to the CMS mission for about a year and whose three children had been baptized by Mr. Hunt. The chief came to see the priest every day,

Fig. 26 Group of Chipewyan Indians at
Brochet Post January 2, 1894
Photograph by James McDougall
HBCA Photograph Collection, 1987/13-242
HBCA PAM

attended Mass, and listened to explanations of the cross, medals and pictures. He seemed very interested in the priest's teachings, saying it was like a great book he could learn in one day and never forget.

Catjedeyaze assured the priest that if a Catholic mission were placed at the north of Lac Caribou, he would become a Catholic and send his youngest child to the mission for education. This reaction illustrated the paramount contribution made by schools to the success of missions, because of the value placed on education by the Natives, and the consequent link with conversion. In the later treaty negotiations with the federal government, Native leaders added provisions for reserve schools, usually denominational, to the treaty promises.[21]

On his way back to Ile à la Crosse, Vegreville met the southern Chipewyan chief, Tsekuniaze, and his band of twenty-five. Tsekuniaze was already attached to the Catholics and Vegreville tried to cement this further. The interest taken in the Catholic faith by the chiefs of both the north and south ends of Lac Caribou seemed to guarantee the success of a mission at Brochet.

Vegreville returned to Ile à la Crosse on April 1, 1861, and wrote enthusiastically to Taché about the prospects for a mission on Lac Caribou. He estimated that 120 to 130 lodges of Chipewyan frequented the north end of the lake; because the Caribou-Eater lodges held more people than those near Ile à la Crosse, the total population might be about 1000. The priest noted also the prevalence of disease among these Chipewyan, for many of the men had died the previous year. Severe losses of population continued to characterize this mission throughout the nineteenth century.

Vegreville also drew Taché's attention to the number of Chipewyan from different posts who could be reached from a mission at Lac du Brochet. About eight lodges trading at Brochet had previously been attached to Churchill, but would probably remain near Brochet. The Chipewyan who usually travelled to Rapid River post could also be contacted there. As well, a mission situated at Lac du Brochet would enable the priests to contact the large population of Inland Inuit, who were said to be very docile, although very attached to conjuring. Many of the northern Chipewyan spoke the Inuit language and would help the priests to learn it.

Vegreville's report of the large numbers of Chipewyan interested in the Catholic religion influenced Taché's decision to make the mission of St. Pierre on Lac Caribou a permanent one, and to place it near the HBC post of Lac du Brochet. The desire to forestall the Anglicans was another fundamental incentive. Taché also hoped to undo the lingering damage done to the relationship of these Chipewyan to the Church by his non-appearance at the north end of the lake in 1849. Another very real factor was the prospect of reaching the Inuit from this new mission and incorporating them into the Church.

Taché assigned Père Gasté and Frère Perréard to help Vegreville begin the new mission. This considerable investment of his slim resources indicated the importance he attached to this mission. By the time this decision was made, however, it appeared that the HBC would close Lac du Brochet post. Chief Trader George Deschambeault agreed to let the mission have the HBC building if the post were closed, and would also allow them to hire Pierre Morin away from the Company.[22] Although the existence of the mission without a nearby post would be very precarious, the bishops appeared determined to keep it open, after so many false starts and ruined hopes. This was a rare scenario in the north. Missions were ordinarily situated near a trading post, where the missionaries could meet the Indians coming in to trade. The missions depended on the posts for transportation and communication, social life, help in time of need, and as a source for hiring temporary labour. In the end, the HBC kept Brochet open and the mission had to supply its own buildings.

Many of the Chipewyan, however, had thought that Brochet would be closed and had gone to trade at Churchill by the time the priests arrived at Brochet in the fall of 1861.[23] The uncertainty about the existence of this post continued to jeopardize the stability of the mission for many years. Protests came from Churchill, Rapid River, Deer's Lake, and even Fond du Lac (Athabasca) posts, that Brochet was drawing off their trade.[24] This unrest within the HBC ranks often threatened the closure of this post.

The preparations for the establishment of the mission were carried out in great secrecy to prevent Mr. Hunt from learning of the Oblate plans.

When Vegreville, Gasté, and Perréard arrived at Rapid River on their way to found the new mission, Hunt at first assumed that they were forced to leave the north, due to the heavy financial loss the Catholic Church had suffered in the fire which destroyed St. Boniface Cathedral. He was unpleasantly surprised to find that they were about to begin another competing mission.[25]

The element of surprise was no more welcome to some of the HBC men. Samuel McKenzie, who was in charge of Rapid River, did not want any competition to his post or to Hunt's mission. Even Charles Thomas, who had been so helpful to the missionaries while they considered establishing near Deer's Lake Post, opposed the siting of a mission at Brochet. He viewed such a move as harmful to his post and his interests. The Oblates accused both of using underhanded efforts to convince the Indians to favour of the Anglicans.[26]

At Frog Portage the priests met the two Chipewyan chiefs, Tsekuniaze and Catjedeyaze, and sought to gain their support for the new mission at Brochet.[27] A quarrel between the Chipewyan and Charles Thomas aided them in this. Tsekuniaze had punished one of Thomas' children, who had thrown a stone at one of his, and Thomas then struck Tsekuniaze on the face. The band, outraged by this insult, threatened to kill Thomas or pillage the fort. Vegreville managed to calm them down, but had to promise to write Deschambeault and tell him the Chipewyan would go to Churchill if Charles Thomas remained at Deer's Lake Post. Evidently, despite their close integration into the fur trade, the pride and independence of the Woods Chipewyan was still very strong and gave them a power they were willing to wield to secure their own demands.

Vegreville, Gasté and Perréard arrived at Brochet on October 3, 1861, and moved into the log shack built for them by Pierre Morin. Throughout the winter, this poor accommodation served the three Oblates as church and house. The missionaries installed the two glass windows of four panes each which they had brought with them from Ile à la Crosse, their only touch of luxury. The one table was used as an altar in the morning and as the dining table for the rest of the day. Their three trunks provided the dining chairs.

In the spring of 1863, the priests decided to build an addition to this one-room structure. Brother Perréard cut down the trees, squared the logs, sawed them and put up the foundation. When completed in the fall, this structure housed the engagé and his family whom Vegreville brought to St. Pierre, as well as the children of Chief Catjedeyaze whom Gasté brought to spend the winter.

Brother Perréard was kept busy trying to provide food and fuel; he fished every day and hauled wood on his back for the fires, because the mission had no dog team. The missionaries hired men to assist the lay-brother when they could, but these men often resented their low pay in comparison to that of the Company servants. The mission had few amenities and no means or place from which to purchase them.

The poverty of the mission afforded little opportunity to vary the monotonous diet, consisting primarily of fish, relieved only occasionally by caribou meat purchased from the Chipewyan. Vegreville suffered frequent episodes of illness from the diet and Gasté found the food very hard on his digestive system. Complaining bitterly of the food and isolation, Perréard refused to go back to Lac Caribou in 1863.

Development of mission

Although St. Pierre was a permanent mission, it was certainly not a very sedentary one, and long journeys were characteristic of it until well into the twentieth century.[28] Soon after the priests had settled into their residence at Brochet, they began to visit the Chipewyan in their camps. On December 3, 1861 Vegreville left for a nineteen-day trip to Lac Brochet and North Line Lake, on the edge of the Barrens, where some of the Chipewyan were camped. He baptized twelve on this trip. On his return he was sick for two months.

Vegreville left at the beginning of March to visit Deer's Lake Post.[29] Soon after his return, a large band of Caribou-Eater Chipewyan arrived from the north-east to trade and to ask the priest to visit them. They had been sent by Chief Catjedeyaze who, with thirty-four hunters and their families, was camped about nine days away from Brochet.[30] This was an unprecedented opportunity for Vegreville to instruct these Chipewyan more

intensively than in their usual brief visits to Brochet in very small groups. Despite his exhaustion after his long trip back from Deer's Lake, he set off with the Chipewyan to this camp.

At the camp of twenty-two tents, Vegreville stayed in the chief's lodge, which was large enough to hold the people gathered for instruction. This sizeable gathering of Chipewyan at that time of year was only made possible by the fact that they had stored up a large amount of caribou. The first night was spent at a feast for all the men of the camp, to which Vegreville contributed tea. Afterwards everyone smoked.

Only then did Vegreville give his first sermon. In the following days, the priest visited each lodge to instruct each family separately. He also tried to dissipate their "prejudices" against the priests - derived presumably either from resentment over Taché's failure to appear thirteen years earlier or from contact with the Anglican mission. Despite Vegreville's best efforts, however, neither the chief nor the rest of the band would commit themselves to the Catholic cause. Instead, they agreed among themselves to wait and hear the minister before deciding whether or not to accept the religion preached by the priests. Since they had invited the minister, they said it would be extremely impolite not to listen to him. Some said they could not tell whether the priests or the ministers were preaching the truth, so would pray with both[31] - an attitude equally unacceptable to either Christian religion.

The Chipewyan were accustomed to driving a hard bargain in trade and the missionaries found they transferred the same attitudes to religion. According to the Oblates, the Chipewyan, accustomed to judging by external appearances, observed the poverty of the Catholics and decided to wait for the minister to arrive, in hopes of more material gain. The missionaries had expected the Natives to be impressed by their willingness to abandon the comforts of "civilized" life to minister to them, and the poverty they endured as a result. Their expectations were not realized; instead, the Natives often appeared to despise them for their lack of wealth. Some spread rumours that the priests would soon disappear from the area or be chased away, which was not entirely unlikely, based on their past experience.[32]

On his way back to Brochet, Vegreville spent three days with Tsekuniaze, the chief of the Woods Chipewyan, and prepared him, his wife and oldest son for their First Communion.[33] They had previously received instruction and baptism at Deer's Lake Post. This seemed to assure the Oblates of the support of at least the southern branch of the Chipewyan to offset the noncommittal attitude of the Caribou-Eaters.

The priests also ministered to the Métis who lived around the mission. In 1866, there were more than twenty-five families, all of them descendants of old Cardinal, who had died in 1854 at the age of ninety-five, according to Vegreville.[34] Their lifestyle was very similar to that of the Chipewyan, although they maintained a separate identity and appear to have been more sedentary. In later years, these Métis seem to have been considered as Cree; the census of 1881 listed 29 Cree at Lac du Brochet.[35]

The HBC servants at Brochet were also almost all Métis. Their relationship with the priests appeared to be close and friendly. They exchanged invitations to dinner, helped each other with trade goods, and occasionally borrowed dog-teams. These Métis attended Mass faithfully on Sundays.[36] In Catholic missions the Métis were intermediaries between the priest and the Indians, a channel of communication because of the mixed heritage which linked them to both parties. The priests were quick to use this advantage and to insist to the Métis that, because of their influence with the Indians, they must set a good example in marriage, family life and attendance at religious services. Even St. Pierre, so far to the north, and so much a Chipewyan mission, had its Métis population, with the resultant tendency to become a sedentary parish as well as an itinerant mission.

The first few years at Brochet were very disappointing to the priests. Several of the Chipewyan reproached the priests for having let their elders die without baptism and gave this as the reason why they would not pray with the priests.[37] The bad feelings engendered by Taché's non-appearance so many years before obviously still rankled.

The influence of Native traditional religion also made it difficult for the Catholic priests to convert the Chipewyan. Unlike Catholicism, the Chipewyan religion had many customs devoted to ensuring the

continuance of the caribou, on which the Caribou-Eaters depended for so much of their subsistence and provision trade.[38] This aspect of Chipewyan life bore little resemblance to the pastoral imagery of the Scriptures or to the European aspects of Christianity which were imported by missionaries. After years of exposure to Christian teaching, long after the inauguration of this mission, one of the Chipewyan converts remarked on how difficult it was to recall the readings from Scripture, although he had read them many times. Yet he could remember easily the oral traditions of his people which he had heard only once or twice in his youth.[39] In the 1930s, Father Egenolf related how central the caribou still was to the Chipewyan. When the catechism asked "What is the most beautiful thing our Lord has created?" the expected answer was "The angels and man", but one little girl insisted on responding "Idthen" (the caribou).[40]

The priests tried to explain the Catholic faith visually through pictures of Christ, Mary, the saints and angels, displayed on the walls of their ramshackle chapel, using them to illustrate the points made in their sermons and instructions. These pictures, mass-produced in France and sent to the missions by pious organizations, proved very attractive to the Chipewyan, who were especially fond of the large red pictures, and any which contained animals. The Chipewyan, however, abhorred those which depicted a serpent. This raised some problems for the Oblates, since a picture of Mary crushing the head of the serpent beneath her feet was one of the most popular in France at the time. Occasionally, the recipient of this picture would cut off the part showing the serpent and keep the rest.

Prophet and priests

The Oblates also had to contend with one of the frequent prophetic appearances among the Chipewyan, a recurring feature of northern missions.[41] This new religious movement began in the summer of 1861, when about 50 lodges of Chipewyan, connected to the mission of Ile à la Crosse, were camped together.[42] Gasté gave a detailed account of this event, as he had heard of it from those present. A mysterious personage, described

as an angel, appeared in the air, dressed in a beautiful robe of many colours, which was covered with hieroglyphic signs. A small child first noticed him and then the whole crowd of adults also saw him. The angel held a sheet of paper in one hand and a pen in the other. He shook hands with everyone and began speaking but only the prophet, Baptiste Tchereddel, could understand what was said. As in many similar cases, Tchereddel and his followers had been neophytes of the Oblates at Ile à la Crosse, where he and his father had been excommunicated for "public concubinage".

The angel predicted an early spring and told the Chipewyan to get to their lands early. The Chipewyan were land travellers, seldom using canoes, and it was important for them to complete their journeys before melting impeded them. Each year they went to their summer hunting grounds while the snow still made travel relatively easy and returned to the post in the fall when the first snow also facilitated their travel. If it proved true, a prophecy such as this would markedly affect their ability to survive and prosper. Unfortunately for the Oblates, the prophet's prediction proved true; the snow did disappear very quickly in the spring of 1862. This lent more credence to his teaching, as opposed to that of the missionaries.

The angel also said that in the following year the caribou would come tamely to be killed around the lodges, and that the prairie buffalo would come north to Lac Caribou in large numbers. He predicted the appearance of a red star and that the water and the leaves of the trees would also appear red. Afterwards, the angel asked all the Chipewyan to tell him of their needs and of the miseries from which they wished to be freed. Tchereddel acted as interpreter, relaying these to the angel, who appeared to take notes about the Chipewyan requests. Then he rose in the air, saying he would take all these wants to his father.

The prophet claimed to be appointed by God to be the "great priest" of the Chipewyan nation. Such a novel claim, alien to traditional Chipewyan customs, seemed to reflect the hierarchical aspects of Catholicism. The appearance displayed syncretic components, with a combination of native and Christian practices and beliefs. The paper and pen held by the angel

and the fact that the figure was described as an angel reflected Christian influences, although the word "angel" may have been used in its meaning of "messenger". Other aspects, such as shaking hands with everyone, were native traditional customs. Still other facets, such as taking the message to the father, were an amalgam of Native and Christian.

Tchereddel continued to receive visits and messages from the spirit but refused to say exactly who this messenger was, when the priests asked him. He was inclined to think it was the same spirit as the one seen in the moon, but whether it was good or bad would become clear in time from the results. Tchereddel's attitude was contrary to that of the priests, who insisted that one should only listen to good spirits, and that they were the best judges of whether a spirit was good or bad. Tchereddel showed the fundamental pragmatism of the Chipewyan, by waiting to decide after the results rather than prejudging.

Further revelations outlined the practice of a new, nativistic religion which combined elements of traditional Chipewyan beliefs with influences from Christian rituals. The prophet forbade the Chipewyan to own more than one dog, giving as his reason that too many dogs caused impatience and anger, offensive to God. Those who followed this ruling could expect to experience severe hardships, because dogs were an important asset to the Chipewyan in the hunt and in transportation. It was a somewhat unusual teaching, since Chipewyan tradition held that their people had originated from the union of a primeval woman with a dog, which was transformed into a man at night.[43]

Tchereddel also forbade his followers to pray with the priests, although they could listen to instructions from either the priests or the minister. His revelations always occurred at night and he only prayed with his neophytes at night; he forbade praying during the day. He and Baptiste Charbon composed hymns which all the Chipewyan chanted incessantly. Tchereddel even called a "general council" of all the Chipewyan to hear the new revelations. This was an unprecedented attempt at forming a large-scale, unified, and exclusive religion, something which had hitherto been alien to Chipewyan culture.

A prophet named Tchedhi-eldel from Lac Caribou spread a very similar

message among the Chipewyan of Fond du Lac (Athabasca) during the winter of 1861-62. Whether this was Tchereddel or a follower is unclear. At Fond du Lac, the prophet's teachings were much more anti-Catholic. He convinced his listeners to throw their rosaries and crosses into the fire, and claimed that the Catholic religion made them die. If they rejected Catholicism, however, they would not die. The Chipewyan measured prophecy by results and were unwilling to continue to follow what they perceived as a false prophet. When many of the prophet's followers at Fond du Lac died and his prophecy of an early spring proved untrue, he lost influence very quickly.[44]

As some of Tchereddel's prophecies also proved false, his prestige declined and his followers left him. Within a few years, he was ready to rejoin the Church, though not entirely as a penitent. He arrived at Brochet to see the priest with a large band of Chipewyan. He spoke to Gasté of his ideas, and the priest concluded that what he really wanted was to see his kind of prayers approved and his superiority over the other Chipewyan asserted. The priests could not accept unauthorized prayers nor do much to recognize Tschereddel as chief of the Chipewyan. The real root of his difficulty with the Church, as with so many others, lay in his marriage. His wife, whom he had married in the Church, had left him and refused to return, and he did not think he could give up his second wife. Gasté offered to help return his "true" wife to him and old Adam, his uncle, talked with Tschereddel all night, trying to convince him to return to the Church. The next day the prophet agreed to come back in the fall with his father and all his family.[45] This was only one instance of the many conversions which failed, temporarily or permanently, because of the Church ruling on monogamous marriages.

Rivalry with the Anglicans

The influence of competition from the Anglican Church had considerable effects on the Roman Catholic mission on Lac Caribou. Although no minister came, an Anglican school-master, C. Adams, settled at Wollaston Lake in the fall of 1862.[46] Charles Thomas hired Tsekuniaze to assist him, much to the distress of the Oblates, who feared the loss of this prominent

convert and the influence he could exert in favour of the Anglicans.[47] This serious threat to the survival of St. Pierre was averted, however, in the spring of 1863 when the school-teacher, like the Oblates, was driven out by the threat of starvation.

On his return to St. Pierre from Ile à la Crosse in the summer of 1863, Gasté heard of new plans by the CMS to establish a school at Deer's Lake Post and another at the northern end of Lac Caribou. Catjedeyaze had gone to the minister to encourage him to begin a mission on Lac Brochet, and the minister in turn had promised Catjedeyaze an advantageous position at this new mission, if he would stay there and attract the other Chipewyan to it. As token of this, Catjedeyaze was to bring his children to the mission at Lac La Ronge to be educated.[48]

Warned by Pierre Morin about this plan, Gasté hastened to seek out the chief at Deer's Lake Post, where about twelve lodges, including those of both chiefs, were camped around the old fort. Catjedeyaze was at first embarrassed to see Gasté but soon his old warmth returned. Gasté instructed the two chiefs about the choices confronting them, with three different religions - Chipewyan, Anglican and Catholic - vying for their adherence. Having convinced them of the errors of Tchereddel's teaching, Gasté kept Catjedeyaze late into the night in his tent to convince him of the falsity of Protestantism.

Gasté knew of Catjedeyaze's great affection for his children and desire to have them educated. To ensure his case, the priest proposed to take them with him to St. Pierre to spend the winter and to send them to the St. Boniface school the following summer. After the morning Mass, the chief agreed to let Gasté take his two older children; the younger one he insisted on keeping with him, for fear the child would be too lonesome. The chief also agreed that the children could go to Red River, but only if he himself took them and saw for himself how they would be treated.

Prospects of growth

Gasté kept the two children through the winter of 1863-64, though he later had to justify this course of action to Taché, who scolded him for incurring such a heavy expense.[49] Since they had already been baptized

by Mr. Hunt, they were rebaptized conditionally into the Catholic faith on February 14, 1864; the eleven-year old boy was named David, and the nine-year old girl Hélène.[50] The children left with Père Vegreville in 1864 to go to Red River. Unfortunately, David died in an accident en route. Gasté was very much afraid that the chief would turn against him and the mission because of this, but Catjedeyaze accepted his son's death with resignation and remained friendly with the priest. He did, however, remark on the increased hazards of more frequent contact with the whites.[51]

Gasté replaced Vegreville in charge of the mission in 1864. Vegreville took all his notes on the Chipewyan language and the two dictionaries with him to St. Boniface, leaving Gasté without the means to improve his linguistic skills.[52] Fortunately, Gasté was able to hire old Adam as an interpreter; his knowledge of French and Chipewyan and, even more importantly, his network of relations, proved invaluable assets to Gasté's first successes with the Chipewyan. Adam's great age and his kinship with almost all of the Chipewyan gave weight to the words he translated for Gasté; the exactness of his translations may have been somewhat dubious, however, for Gasté lamented Adam's poor understanding of French. The old man was also accused of trading furs, contrary to HBC directives.[53] When those hired to work for the missions engaged in free-trade, HBC suspicions of mission involvement were naturally roused.

Chief Trader George Deschambeault, who initiated the post at Lac du Brochet, had proved a consistent friend to the mission, and in 1864-65 he took charge of the post himself. This was a boost to its prestige, which in turn enhanced the prospects of the mission. Gasté was quick to claim credit for this move, telling the Chipewyan he had encouraged it, in order that they could obtain all their material needs at the post and all their spiritual requirements at the mission.[54] Deschambeault found the 300 or more Caribou-Eaters he encountered at the post "barharous and audacious",[55] and hoped the mission would render them more docile and "human". The Chipewyan hoped that the post would provide a wider range of goods and services, more like that of a fur-trading post than a small-scale provisions establishment. The result was a concordance of expectations on the part of the priests, the Hudson's Bay Company, and the Chipewyan,

all of which focused on Lac du Brochet in 1864-65. In 1865, however, Deschambeault was transferred to the charge of Cumberland District, and Lac du Brochet was again threatened with closure. Mr. Whiteway, the clerk who replaced Deschambeault, had only about twenty pieces of goods instead of the 140 the Chipewyan expected.[56]

Catjedeyaze planned to visit his little girl at Red River in 1865, and hoped also to see Taché and the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company. Gasté wanted Bishop Taché to baptize the chief, in recognition and reaffirmation of the important position he held in ensuring the success of St. Pierre. Although Gasté was grateful for the chief's influence, he observed that Catjedeyaze would expect good gifts from Taché, and that he appeared to think he should get annual presents.[57] Catjedeyaze probably had several objectives in mind for his visit. Gasté had previously suggested that Taché keep an eye on him while he was at Red River, to prevent him from becoming attached to the free-traders there. Although the chief could meet free-traders at Frog Portage, the Hudson's Bay Company would regard it as a more serious threat if the chief linked up with those at Red River.[58]

Deschambeault hoped to turn this project to the advantage of the HBC, especially if the Governor recognized Catjedeyaze as the only chief for the Chipewyan. It was Catjedeyaze who had drawn the Chipewyan from Churchill to come to Brochet that year; only a few remained at Churchill and these promised to come to Brochet the following winter. Catjedeyaze had also persuaded the Chipewyan of Deer's Lake Post to come to Brochet the following year. Gasté thought that those from Rapid River would also come and make the mission and post at the end of Lac Caribou very important. The influence Catjedeyaze held over the other Chipewyan was so important to both Gasté and Deschambeault that they were willing to treat him with a status and respect which was seldom accorded to chiefs of any small band society.

By the spring of 1865, Gasté could point with pride to the fact that about forty lodges of Chipewyan had come to camp around his mission. They had so completely altered their dispositions from their previous rebellious attitude as to be almost unrecognisable.[59]

Disastrous epidemic

His joy was short-lived, however, because a devastating epidemic of measles and scarlet fever swept through the country in 1865-6. Gasté met Catjedeyaze at Deer's Lake Post. The chief had probably visited Red River, for he was returning from Norway House. On this journey, Catjedeyaze had contracted measles and was near death when Gasté encountered him. The chief asked to be baptized and received the name Laurent. He was buried on August 12, 1865.[60] His little daughter Hélène, a resident at the St. Boniface school, died of the same epidemic soon afterwards, on September 11, 1865.[61] The little girl had often been unhappy at the school, explaining that she missed Father. The sisters interpreted this to mean Père Vegreville but, from the evident strong love between Catjedeyaze and his children, it appears more likely that the young girl longed for her own father.

When Gasté arrived back at St. Pierre, almost every family was sick. A large number of Chipewyan had gathered to meet the boats, probably in expectation of increased trade goods, and as a result, the disease spread rapidly through their camps.[62] Gasté estimated that he saved about one-half of the sick under his care but the sickness continued to spread.[63] The number of baptisms registered to the mission increased dramatically, from forty-one in 1864 to ninety-eight in 1865, presumably because Gasté baptized the dying. The HBC journal estimated that forty-six hunters attached to the post died from this infection, as well as many children.[64] The loss of their hunters had a catastrophic impact on the families.

Gasté was a proponent of homeopathic medicine, which used minute doses of like medicines to cure like diseases. He used these remedies to treat himself, Brother Lalican and also the Chipewyan.[65] Père Moulin, who appeared to have scant respect for this type of medicine, was relieved that in this case the homeopathic remedies appeared to help, and earned the admiration of the Chipewyan.[66] Gasté travelled through the month of January to visit the Chipewyan camps and do what he could to help them. This effort on his part impressed them and drew some to be more sympathetic to the religion he preached. The combination of good "medicine" for soul and body was a common one in the mission fields and proved a

potent attraction to the Chipewyan.

Nevertheless, the deaths of so many in this epidemic, and especially that of Catjedeyaze, were severe handicaps to the growth of the mission. The Chipewyan believed for many years that the Christian religion preached by the priests led to death and that the Sacraments, especially Baptism, were medicine too strong for the Caribou-Eaters. As proof, they cited the example of Catjedeyaze, their first chief, who had confided his children to Gasté, only to have both die.[67]

When Bishop Grandin visited St. Peter's in 1866, the after-effects of the epidemic were still affecting the Chipewyan attitude to the mission. The Bishop was inclined was to close this arduous and unprofitable mission. His accommodation in the miserable "barracks" which formed the establishment of St. Pierre only added to his determination. The chapel could not even keep the rain and snow from falling on the altar, while the two sections which housed the priests and brothers could only be said to protect them from the cold, but certainly not from the rain.

More important than the physical structure of the mission was the lack of conversions. Grandin claimed that the fairly large population of Chipewyan attached to Brochet was deceptive, since they did not arrive in large numbers at certain set times. Small groups came in for very short periods of time, none of them staying long enough to be sufficiently instructed in the faith. The only way the missionaries could overcome this sporadic contact was to make long and very difficult trips to the Chipewyan camps. Some had become good Christians who came in each year to visit the mission but most of the Chipewyan, Grandin judged, were indifferent to the faith.[68]

About twenty of the Chipewyan came in for the Christmas celebrations, which Grandin conducted with pomp and ceremony. When he left on December 26, 1866, he was convinced that this was the most difficult of all his missions. It was so far off the usual transport routes that only bare necessities could be brought in. Wood for either fuel or construction was scarce and agriculture impossible. These factors made it very difficult to maintain the priests and lay-brothers of the mission without expensive imports of food and goods to barter for meat. Most important,

Fig. 27 Chapel R.C. Mission, Reindeer Lake
Photo by James McDougall, January 2, 1894
HBCA Photograph Collection, 1987/13-239
HBCA PAM

from a missionary point of view, it offered little hope for adult conversions. On Grandin's visit there were only four communions and seven confirmations.[69]

Grandin decided it would be unwise to engage in further construction at the mission until the HBC decided whether to keep either Brochet or Deer's Lake Post open.[70] The mission should be sited near whichever of these the HBC chose. The mission as it was, however, seemed to him a futile waste of effort. The small number of Indians and the prospect of even fewer if the HBC closed the post, plus the lack of any sound structures for the mission, seemed to demand its closure.

First Contact with the Inuit

Almost all the Caribou-Eaters gathered in the summer at Lake Kasant'ue (Kazan) or Lake Nuttielt'elit'ue (Nueltin). At the beginning of spring, a number of Inuit, with whom these Chipewyan were friendly, were also there.[71] These reports of amicable relations between the Chipewyan and the Inuit belie the notion of continued enmity between the two groups and reflect the realities of nineteenth-century life, when they shared a very similar lifestyle based primarily on the caribou.[72] As spring advanced, the Inuit retreated gradually to their own lands to hunt caribou and some Chipewyan hunters without families went with them. The remaining Chipewyan, from Brochet, Churchill, and even Lake Athabasca, stayed at these lakes, living off fish and game and occasional caribou, while they waited for the caribou herds to return to their lands in autumn.[73]

The Chipewyan encouraged Gasté to consider a mission at this place, the only location where they could stay for long periods of time. But, since some families remained near Brochet and did not go to the Barren Lands in summer, the priest concluded that the best thing to do was to continue to build at Brochet. Then, if the post did not draw enough Chipewyan each spring and fall, one of the priests should travel each summer to their camp, where they could easily build a small house-chapel.

The Chipewyan, perhaps trying to deflect the priest's attention from themselves, had told Gasté that the Inuit would be less rebellious to religion.[74] In 1868, they led the priest as far as Dubawnt Lake, where he

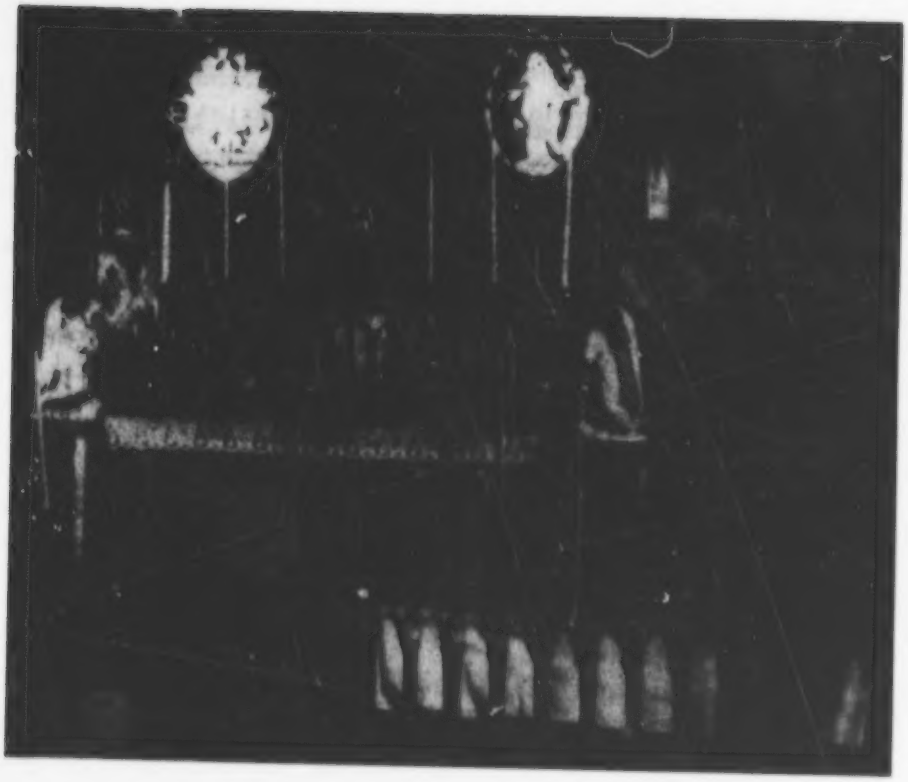


Fig. 28 Interior of Chapel, R.C. Mission
Reindeer Lake
Photo by James McDougall, January 2, 1894
HBCA Photograph Collection 1987/13-236
HBCA PAM

first met the Inland Inuit or Caribou Eskimos. Gasté could not speak their language but his many-buttoned black robe and the large crucifix at his belt attracted the attention of the Inuit. He was impressed by their good health, virility, and well-made clothing, and attempted to persuade them to trade at Brochet, where he could hope to convert them.[75]

This upset those at Fort Churchill, who complained that Gasté had induced five of their Inland Inuit to go to Brochet, leaving their families a burden on the Chipewyan.[76] These Inuit lived a life very similar to that of the Caribou-Eater Chipewyan; their provision trade was important to Churchill and their move to Brochet was deeply resented. Bishop Grandin met some of the Inuit in 1870 when they came to trade and encouraged them to come in greater numbers. Since they had no snowshoes nor sleds and feared the forest, the Inuit were unwilling to comply.[77]

Despite this unwillingness, some of the Inuit continued to go to Brochet; the 1881 census listed 217 attached to that post.[78] By 1894, however, the majority of the Inland Inuit ceased to trade directly at Brochet. Instead, three of their group acted as middlemen and traded for them all.[79]

Bishop Grandin's 1870 visit

In 1868, St. Pierre was made part of the new vicariate of St. Albert under the control of Bishop Grandin. Grandin had wanted to close down the mission while he acted as Taché's auxiliary. When he was solely responsible for it, he visited again in March 1870, travelling all the way from his new residence at St. Albert. In the slightly more than three years since his last visit, nothing had happened at St. Pierre to change his mind. The Chipewyan, suffering severely from diseases, resisted Christianity and depended on their old religion. Some blamed the priests and the religion they preached as the cause of their illness.[80] Only a few of those who came in to trade would attend the mission exercises. According to Brother Guillet, only four or five Chipewyan families, who had recently moved from Ile à la Crosse to Brochet, were considered Catholics.[81]

The Chipewyan camped around the mission at Pentecost proved

indifferent to the presence of the bishop. Their drums and chants, accompanying the hand-games, resounded through the night. During the day, the mission bell rang to summon them to catechism, instructions, or Mass, but only a few came.[82] Grandin resolved to close the mission or keep it only as an outpost of Ile à la Crosse. But Gasté and the Chipewyan adherents of the mission begged Grandin to keep it open. The Bishop finally assented, in the hope that the mission might yet prove fruitful for the Church, especially since it could prove an opening to the Inuit. Grandin was also aware of Taché's concern for this mission, and the regret he would feel if it were definitely closed, so many years after his first founding.

Grandin closed his stay at Lac Caribou with a solemn outdoor procession for the Feast of Corpus Christi, through an arch of branches and decorations of cloth loaned from the HBC store. This was followed the next day by a Mass for the dead, designed to soften the attitudes of the Chipewyan. His final step was to plant a Cross to commemorate the mission. All of these were aspects of Oblate missiology which can be traced back to their Restoration home missions of France, where these techniques were used to bring back those lost to the faith during the years of the French Revolution.[83]

Grandin removed Père Legoff and Frère Lalican, and left Gasté alone with Frère Guillet, but gave them permission to build a more suitable combination house and chapel. This was given against his better judgement, which insisted that the mission should be closed. The mission buildings were in such poor shape, however, that Grandin felt it essential to alleviate their condition, even if only for a few months.[84] His men and some from the HBC dug up a garden, cut firewood and sawed planks for building before they left.

A stable and permanent mission

Despite the obvious drawbacks, Gasté had some grounds for optimism for his mission. The HBC had recently closed its post at Deer's Lake and left Brochet open, thus offering a little more stability to the mission endeavour. The twelve Chipewyan families who had been attached to Deer's

Lake Post, led by old Nanedi - probably the same man hired to guide Maisonneuve in 1850 - moved north to rejoin their relatives at Lac du Brochet in 1870. Some of these Chipewyan had been baptized by Taché years before, at the beginning of this mission enterprise.[85] Their presence attested to a continuity between the first Lac Caribou mission of the 1840s and that of the 1870s.

On November 5, 1871, as Gasté celebrated the Mass of the Dead, those in the congregation witnessed an apparition of an Oblate at the altar with him. From their description, Gasté was led to believe that it was Père Maitre, who had been his novice-master at St. Norbert. The spring mail brought the news that Maitre had indeed died the previous August. Gasté accepted this vision as a great grace for the mission, and an encouragement to persevere in his attempt to convert the Chipewyan.[86]

Moreover, Gasté had Brother Celestin Guillet to assist him. This brother improved the living conditions at St. Pierre, to the benefit of the priests and the school-children. Guillet had an aptitude for doing "women's work" such as making soap and doing the laundry, skills which relieved the mission of the task of hiring an outsider. Guillet also became adept at raising animals and was able to keep chickens and eventually cattle at the mission. He even proved it possible to grow potatoes, onions and cabbages at Brochet. In addition, he had to obtain about 3000 fish for the dogs as well as another 3000 for the personnel of the mission each year. The three fires of the mission required at least a cord of wood per day during the coldest part of winter. As the mission continued the brother had to go farther to find fuel and this added even more to his workload.[87]

Grandin could not send men to build for them and could only provide some construction wood, none of which was large enough to be made into boards. As a result, construction was postponed for another year.[88] Gasté continued to search for better wood and received some financial help from the HBC. Finally, in 1872, the work on the new house-chapel could begin.[89] This was built about eight feet lower down than the previous buildings, somewhat protected from the north winds. During the winter of 1872-73, planks were sawed for finishing the house-chapel.

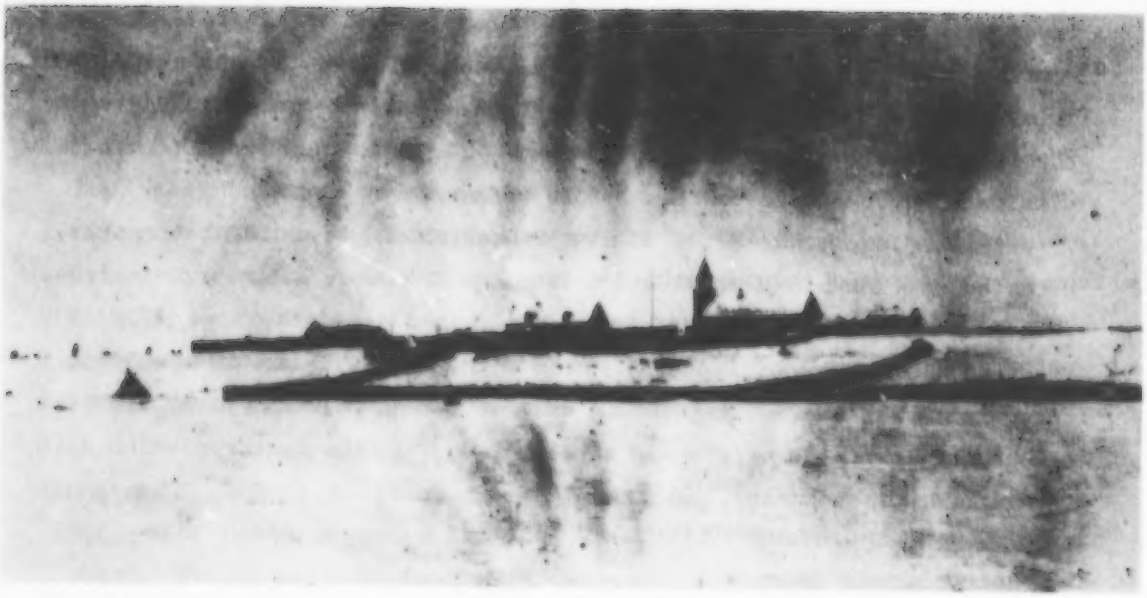


Fig. 29 R.C. Mission Reindeer Lake
Photo by James McDougall, January 2, 1894
HBCA Photograph Collection, 1987/13-238
HBCA PAM

In the summer of 1873, Père Blanchet arrived to assist both Gasté and Guillet. He made a stairway, then framed the partitions and made a magnificent panelled door for the chapel. The chapel measured 30 ft. by 20 ft., while the room for receiving the Indians was 10 ft. by 20 ft. The priests lived on the second storey.[90] By Easter, Blanchet had put the finishing touches to a magnificent Gothic altar. This was so impressive, according to Brother Guillet, that many of the Chipewyan lost their indifference to religion. Several came to confession and twenty-five children were baptized.[91] On November 1, 1874, Gasté blessed the new chapel and celebrated the first Mass at the carved altar built by Père Blanchet. At the same time he installed the Stations of the Cross.[92] With this the mission of St. Peter's took on a more permanent appearance.

Père Bonald described St. Pierre as resembling a medieval monastery. Situated on a sand hill about 300 m from the HBC post, the church included a closed gallery which served the Oblates as a community room. In 1877 the bell-tower was constructed, with Gothic-style false windows plus a three-foot rose-window, painted in many different colours. Seen from far off in the lake, the effect was superb.[93] A separate rectory, which also functioned as orphanage and school, was built in 1882-3. (See cover photograph).

Education

The important role of education in the success of the mission was displayed in Gasté's efforts to secure the two children of Chief Catjedeyaze by offering them an education at Red River. Despite his very slim resources, Gasté had taken the children back to Brochet in 1863 and given them some schooling over the winter. The chief, intent on securing schooling for his children, had intended to entrust them to the Anglicans for their education and Gasté viewed his custody of them as a great coup. Vegreville later brought one of these children to St. Boniface to be educated.[94]

In 1870 a more regular school began, with Brother Guillet as teacher, in addition to all his other duties. The brother could speak very little Chipewyan, and found it difficult to make the children sit still. The

mixture of languages made his task even more demanding. He had Chipewyan, Cree and Métis children; the latter spoke Cree and a few words of French. Four orphans lived at the mission and two children from the post attended as day-students. As happened so often in all schools based on European methods of punishment, the brother's attempts at disciplining the children led to complaints from the Métis parents.[95]

Like most of the early mission schools in the north, this school was an offshoot of the mission. Orphans were taken care of at the mission, which fed and clothed them, as well as providing their education. The local Métis post children also attended, while living at home. By 1874, the school had about fifteen children, only three of whom were orphans.[96] Gasté lamented the lack of means to take in a greater number of orphans, survivors of the series of disastrous epidemics which killed their parents. Free of family ties, these children could be reared to be good Catholic heads of families, who would influence the rest of their people.[97] But the school at Brochet was still in the early mission stage, an adjunct to missionary teaching, rather than a separate enterprise.

Post-1870 Stability

For years Gasté prayed earnestly for the conversion of the Chipewyan chief, Betshi-delkazi (Redhead), who had succeeded Catjedeyaze. The priest was convinced that if Redhead became a Catholic, many more of the tribe would follow.[98] His efforts met with success in 1877, when Chief Redhead was baptized at Midnight Mass, and given the name Alphonse. Many more Chipewyan than usual were in attendance, and the altar and church were decorated as lavishly as possible. Because of this conversion, fifty of the rest of the tribe soon followed; within a few years most of the Chipewyan were considered Catholics.[99] Among those who followed Chief Redhead into the Catholic fold was Beslini, the well-known medicine-man and former interpreter for the Anglicans.[100]

Chief Redhead's conversion and the subsequent adoption of Catholicism by his band demonstrated his leadership of the Chipewyan. He maintained this position, in part, by keeping abreast of developments which might affect them. When A.S. Cochrane of the Geological Survey of Canada was

at Brochet in 1881, Chief Redhead asked him to inform the federal government that it must make treaty with the Chipewyan before beginning a railway survey through his country.[101] This was at a time when some speculated that the Hudson Bay Railway or another might run across the Barrens. Such immediate concern on the part of the Chipewyan belies any assumption that their remoteness implied complete isolation from current events.

The population of Chipewyan attached to both the post and mission at Lac du Brochet was listed as 386 in 1881.[102] In 1894, 124 Chipewyan hunters traded at Brochet.[103] Despite these numbers, the HBC threatened many times to close the post. The presence of the mission, however, weighed heavily against these efforts. Chief Trader Horace Bélanger, in charge of the Cumberland District of the HBC in the 1880s, recognized that the influence of the Church over the Chipewyan had led them to consider Brochet their home. Neither the Chipewyan nor the Church would leave, even if the Company did, and if the HBC closed its post, it would be an open invitation to free-traders.[104] The Chipewyan attachment to Lac du Brochet had been motivated more by the mission than by the post, but the very fact of their attendance at St. Pierre demanded the continuance of the post to secure their trade.

In 1897 the HBC again threatened to close its post at Brochet. Père Gasté, who had spent his whole missionary life in building up the mission, determined to combat this impending disaster. He hastened to Prince Albert and alerted the Church authorities. He also publicized the situation so that the free-traders of the area would go to Brochet to take advantage of this opportunity. Moreover, he made an arrangement with F.C. Baker of Prince Albert, whereby Gasté himself took up a large York boat loaded with goods, which the "halfbreed Merasty" traded under the supervision of the priest. The competition provided by the priest again influenced the HBC to maintain its post at Brochet, to the benefit of both the Church and the Chipewyan:

> ...without some opposition to force the Company to fairly liberal treatment of the Indians, the usefulness of the Mission would cease as the Chipewyans would go and trade at more competitive points in Athabaska and the Esquimaux to Churchill.[105]

In 1904 the free-traders withdrew when Revillon Frères opened a trading post at Brochet.[106] The HBC sold its Brochet post in 1931 to Revillon Frères, which continued in operation until bought out by the HBC in 1936. The Company then resumed its trade at Brochet.[107] With a consistency unrivalled by any of these economic enterprises, and despite all the uncertainties which had dogged it from the beginning, the mission of St. Pierre persisted in its site at Lac du Brochet.

Père Gasté spent the entire forty years of his active missionary career at St. Pierre and left in 1901 only because of ill-health. Through all these years of tumble-down buildings, scarcity of food, long winter travels, and threats of closure, Gasté persevered in his hopes of winning the Chipewyan and the Inuit to the Roman Catholic faith. His determination was the rock on which the stability of this northernmost Manitoba mission of the pre-1870 period rested.

Notes Lac Caribou

1. In English this lake was called Deer's Lake, while the French always referred to it as Lac Caribou. The name Reindeer Lake was applied to it much later than this period. To avoid confusion with the HBC post of Deer's Lake, Lac Caribou will be used throughout this report.

2. AASB "Notice sur la Mission du Lac Caribou par Mgr. Taché" (hereafter Taché...Notice).

3. In French the Chipewyan were called Montagnais. The origins of this terminology are unclear. Taché could not understand why this expression was used, since the Chipewyan lived about as far from any mountains as any people could, and in no way resembled the Montagnais of Quebec. The expression predates the missionaries by many years. It may date back to the French fur trade of the western interior.

4. NAC MG17A17 M2136. Registre, Lac Caribou. This is the source of all further references to baptisms and marriages at the mission.

5. AD HPF4191.C75R226. Vegreville to Mme. Cox, Visitation nun, 3 June 1863. Vegreville used the term "Woods Chipewyan" to distinguish them from the Caribou-Eaters. Jas. G.E. Smith has written extensively on the influence the fur trade exerted to cause the Chipewyan to move into the forest areas and lose their original affluence based on the caribou.

6. LCSB II (1903), Taché to his mother, 23 July 1847.

7. Taché...Notice. All further references to Taché's visits to Deer's Lake, unless otherwise noted, are derived from this source.

8. HBCA D5/37 fo. 535. Wm. Mactavish to Simpson, 16 August 1853.

9. LCSB II (1903), pp. 344-46. Taché to his mother, 1 May 1848 and 9 May 1848. Taché did not explain what the illness was. Jas. G.E. Smith (personal communication) has speculated that it may have arisen from a lack of food following on more intensive involvement in the fur trade, which necessitated a change in location and resources, often to the detriment of the Natives.

10. The details of Maisonneuve's trip are given in Taché...Notice, which includes a copy of a letter from Maisonneuve to Taché, 22 July 1851.

11. HBCA D5/51, fo. 76d. Geo. Deschambeault to Simpson, 12 January 1860.

12. Cf. Jas. G.E. Smith, "Economic Uncertainty in an 'Original Affluent Society': Caribou and Caribou-Eater Chipewyan Adaptive Strategies", Arctic Anthropology, Vol. XV-I (1978), pp. 68-88.

13. Turquetil, "Chronique historique de la Mission Saint-Pierre du lac Caribou" (hereafter Chronique), p. 182. In Missions Vol. 50 (1912), pp. 177-201, pp.278-301.

14. AASB T0291-2, Grandin to Taché, 7 January 1861 and AD, Grandin to Mazenod, 22 June 1861.

15. AASB T0114-24. Vegreville to Taché, 29 July 1860.

16. PAA 71.220/1054. Taché to Vegreville, 4 June 1860.

17. Cf. NAC MG17A17 M2083. Vegreville to Hunt, 4 August 1860.

18. AASB T0114-24, Vegreville to Taché, 29 July 1860.

19. AASB T0369-70. Grandin to Taché, 1 April 1861.

20. AD HE2221. T12 Z250. Vegreville to Taché, 2 April 1861. This letter is the source of the further details of this trip and of the Chipewyan whom Vegreville met.

21. Cf. Jean Friesen, "Education and Treaty Rights in Treaty No. 1". Brief to Fort Alexander Band, September 1989. The author analyzes the requests for schools to be included in the provisions of Treaty One, a request which came from the Natives rather than from the government.

22. AASB T0493. Grandin to Taché, 15 May 1861.

23. AASB T1052-80, Gasté to Taché, [1862]

24. Cf. AASB T0301, Grandin to Taché, 17 January 1861 and AASB T0369-70, Grandin to Taché, 2 April 1861.

25. NAC MG17A17 M2083. Vegreville to Superior-General, Mgr. Grandin, Mgr. Taché, and Père Faraud, 7 September 1861.

26. AD HEF3424.V16C5. Vegreville to Governor of HBC, 8 September 1861.

27. AASB T1057-80. Gasté to Taché, [1862].

28. PAM Tape of interview with Father Darveau, Brochet, conducted by Philippe Mailhot, 16 Jan. 1986.

29. AD HE2221 T12 Z257. Vegreville to Taché, 8 June 1862. Also cf. AASB T1062-3. Gasté to Taché, [1862].

30. AD HPF 4191.C75 R226. Vegreville to Mme. Cox, 3 June 1863.

31. AASB T1076-7. Gasté to Taché, [1862].

32. AASB T3052-61. Gasté to Taché, [1864].

33. AD HE2221. T12 Z257. Vegreville to Mme. Cox, 3 June 1863.

34. NAC MG17A17 M2083. Vegreville to Mme. Cox, 16 December 1866.

35. HBCA B49/e/9, Cumberland House Report, 1885.

36. HBCA B179/a/15, fo. 3, 14 January 1866, and fo. 6-7d, 7 February 1866-14 February 1866.

37. AASB T2174. Gasté to Taché, 18 May 1863.

38. Jas. G.E. Smith, "Chipewyan and Fur Trader Views of Rupert's Land".

39. Turquetil, Chronique, p. 281.

40. R.H. Cockburn, "After-Images of Rupert's Land", p. 287.

41. Cf. Martha McCarthy, "The Missions of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate to the Athapaskans, 1846-70: Theory, Structure and Method". Ph.D. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1981, pp. 287-327.

42. AASB T1057-80. Gasté to Taché, [1862].

43. James G.E. Smith, "Chipewyan", Handbook of North American Indians, p. 279

44. NAC M2073. Clut to Vegreville, June 17, 1862.

45. AASB T2979-95. Gasté to Taché, 13 December 1864.

46. CMS A95. T.T. Smith, Journal, August 1862.

47. AASB T2180. Gasté to Taché, 18 May 1863.

48. AASB T3052-64. Gasté to Taché, [1863].

49. AASB T2979-95. Gasté to Taché, 13 December 1864.

50. NAC MG17A17, M2136. Registre, Lac Caribou.

51. AASB T2979-95. Gasté to Taché, 13 December 1864. AASB T3431-4. Gasté to Taché, 28 June 1865.

52. AASB T2789-92. Gasté to Taché, 7 May 1864.

53. Ibid.

54. PAA 71.220/8057. Gasté to Taché. 13 December 1864. Gasté had written to Deschambeault to this effect in April, 1864, (PAA 71.220/8057) saying that all the Chipewyan claimed there were not enough goods at Lac du Brochet, and that furs were plentiful in the area, indicating that a fur trade post would be viable. In 1894, however, when Chief Factor James McDougall tried to force the Chipewyan to trade furs rather than provisions, they strongly resisted, though to no avail, since the HBC no longer required much provision trade.

55. PAA 71.220/196. Geo. Deschambeault to Vegreville, 26 December 1864.

56. AASB T3511-8, Gasté to Taché, 12 August 1865.

57. AASB T3432, Gasté to Taché, 28 June 1865.

58. PAA 71.220/8057. Gasté to Taché, 7 May 1864.

59. AASB T3390-2. Gasté to Taché, 19 June 1865.

60. NAC MG17A17, M2136. Registre, Lac Caribou.

61. PAA 71.220/196. Marie Adele Nebraska to Vegreville, 7 December 1865.

62. AD G-LPP 2540. Moulin to Fabre, 28 May 1866.

63. AASB T3511-18. Gasté to Taché, 12 August 1865.

64. HBCA B179/a/15, fo. 10, 25 February 1866.

65. AASB T3516-18. Gasté to Taché, 12 August 1865.

66. AD G-LPP 2540. Moulin to Fabre, 28 May 1866.

67. Turquetil, Chronique, p. 283.

68. AASB T-52464-77. Renseignements, Mgr. Grandin.

69. AASB T52328-39. Notes de Mgr. Grandin, Grandin to Taché, 25 November 1866.

70. Grandin to Propagation de la Foi, 1 September 1870, and Grandin to Superior General, 5 August 1870, Missions Vol. 9 (1870).

71. AASB T3949-54. Gasté to Taché, 28 April 1866.

72. Cf. Jas. G.E. Smith, "Chipewyan, Cree and Inuit Relations West of Hudson Bay, 1714-1955", Ethnohistory 28/2 (Spring 1981), pp. 133-156.

73. AASB T3949-54. Gasté to Taché, 28 April 1866.

74. AASB T1076. Gasté to Taché, 22 April 1864.

75. Missions 1870. Gasté to Grandin, 15 July 1869.

76. HBCA B239/c/18. C.N. Griffin to J.W. Wilson, 2 January 1869. Reference courtesy of B. Donaldson.

77. PAA 71.220/6486. Journal of Fr. C. Guillet, OMI, p. 14.

78. HBCA B49/e/9, Cumberland House Report 1885.

79. HBCA D25/17, fo. 167. Inspection Report, Jas. McDougall, 1 to 8 January 1894.

80. AASB T13841. Gasté to Taché, 24 February 1874.

81. PAA 71.220/6486. Journal of Fr. Celestin Guillet, OMI, p. 13, August 1869.

82. Ibid, p. 16.

83. For a detailed explanation, see Ch. 2 of McCarthy, op. cit.

84. AASB T52471. Grandin, Renseignements....November 1872.

85. PAA 71.220/6486. Journal of Fr. C. Guillet, OMI, p. 21-22, 1870.

86. Ibid, p. 23-24.

87. Missions Vol. 15 (1877). Guillet to R. P. Tatin, 10 September 1875.

88. AASB T13838-45. Gasté to Taché, February 24, 1874.

89. PAA 71.220/6486. Journal of Fr. C. Guillet, OMI, p. 29.

90. Ibid, p. 36.

91. Ibid, pp. 40-41.

92. Missions 1876, p. 273.

93. PAA 71.220/6486. Journal of Fr. C. Guillet, OMI, p. 60.

94. AASB T8971. Gasté to Taché, 13 June 1865.

95. PAA 71.220/6484. Journal of Fr. C. Guillet, OMI, p. 20.

96. PAM MG12B1, fo. 774. List of Catholic schools in Diocese of St. Albert, 20 June 1874.

97. AASB T13838-45. Gasté to Taché, 24 February 1874.

98. PAA 71.220/6486. Journal of Fr. C. Guillet, p. 61, 25 December 1877.

99. Turquetil, Chronique, p. 198.

100. PAA 71.220/6486. Journal of Fr. C. Guillet, p. 63, Easter 1878.

101. NAC RG10 Vol. 3771, File 34, #660-2. L. Vankoughnet to John A. Macdonald, 24 December 1881.

102. HBCA B49/e/9. Cumberland House Report 1885.

103. HBCA D25/17, fo. 167. Inspection Report, Jas. McDougall, 1 to 8 January 1894.

104. HBCA B49/b/10, fo. 21. Bélanger to Wrigley, 5 January 1885.

105. HBCA B296/e/4. Report on Trade, Lac du Brochet Post, 1900-01.

106. Turquetil, op. cit., p. 188-90.

107. Information courtesy of R.H. Cockburn, personal communication, 20 January 1989.

Saint Charles

By the early 1850s about 200 French Métis and a number of English mixed-blood people lived along both sides of the Assiniboine, west of Sturgeon Creek.[1] The filling up of the old French and English parishes along the Red River had motivated them to occupy these vacant lots. Another impetus was the search for higher ground, especially after the great flood of 1852. Many of the Chelsea Hospital Pensioners, who arrived at Red River in 1848, also settled in this area,[2] adding to the population mixture. The increased market for produce which resulted from their presence and that of the other military garrisons in Red River - the 6th Regiment of Foot (1846-48) and the Royal Canadian Rifles (1857-61) - was another incentive to increased farming. Governor Simpson actively encouraged the production of local flour, beef and buffalo tallow, and robes to replace expensive imported provisions.

The North West Review stated that the original Catholic French Métis community here was formed by about sixty families of Plains hunters.[3] Although some may have built homes in the area before the 1850s, the earliest reference in the HBC Land Register is to 1851. Most lots were listed later in the 1850s and into the 1860s.[4] Many residents probably did not bother to obtain title from the Company, however.

By 1856 the parish of St. Charles, which included Headingley, had a population of 348, made up of sixty-two families, twenty of whom were Protestant and forty-two Catholic. Of these, fifty-four heads of families had been born in Rupert's Land, an indication of the predominance of Métis and mixed-blood. At the same time, the neighbouring St. James Parish had a population of thirty-nine Protestant and twenty-nine Catholic families.[5] This mixture of religions represents a new element on the Assiniboine, much different from the 1840s when the total populations of St. François Xavier and Baie St. Paul were listed as Catholic.[6]

These Métis attended the parishes of St. François Xavier or St. Boniface, which were about equidistant from them. In 1851 the Anglican Bishop at Red River and Governor Eden Colvile authorized the construction of a rectory near Omand's Creek on the Assiniboine,[7] east of Sturgeon Creek. Within four years the church of St. James had been built on this site.[8] This parish was established to serve the needs of an existing community of Anglicans and was, in effect, a continuation of the Parish of St. John's. But it was also in a position to serve the French Catholic Métis living nearby along the Assiniboine. In 1853, Rev. G.O. Corbett established a Protestant mission at Headingley, between St. François Xavier and Sturgeon Creek, where only one Protestant family resided at that time.[9] His purpose in doing this was to convert the Catholic Métis of the area.[10]

These two Protestant missions on the Assiniboine provided religious services at sites between the two old Catholic parishes of St. Boniface and St. François Xavier. Because they lived in an area where Protestant and Catholic intermingled, at least geographically, Taché could foresee that the Catholic families might prefer a neighbourhood Protestant church to the long trip to either of the Catholic churches. The conversion of the Sturgeon Creek Métis to Protestantism loomed as a distinct possibility, which Taché would do his utmost to prevent. Corbett clearly recognized that he had been a catalyst for the founding of the Catholic mission on Sturgeon Creek:

> Now, until our Mission commenced here, and its machinery began to be applied to the wants of this place, no Popish priest came near this spot, but since it has been in operation, and a Romish family has come over to us, and some children of other Popish families attended our school, the priests have come up to our district, giving their lectures by turns, and now they are determined to build a chapel in our midst.[11]

Fig. 30 Parish of St. Charles and St. James
PAM N6307

Priests from St. Boniface were sent to give religious services on Sturgeon Creek in the early 1850s and in the summer of 1854 Taché told Mr. Laflèche to construct a building for this Catholic mission, as yet simply called "la paroisse de la rivière Esturgeon". The HBC granted Lots 1303-1304 to the Catholic Church for this new mission in 1855; this became Lot 95 on the Dominion Land Survey.[12] The mission was soon named St. Charles, probably after the founder of the Oblates, Charles Eugène de Mazenod, or possibly because La Vérendrye called the present Assiniboine River the St. Charles River.[13]

Because the Métis were absent from the parish for long stretches of time in the summer and fall, no elaborate construction was required. Laflèche built a small log structure to serve as both rectory and chapel. He did not reside at the mission but travelled to it from St. Boniface, until his departure for Quebec over the winter of 1854-55. The rectory-chapel continued to serve as overnight accommodation for those priests from either St. François Xavier or St. Boniface who visited the mission. These visits occurred usually in winter; St. Charles was as empty in the summer as St. François Xavier and other Métis communities.

A number of priests visited the mission from St. Boniface, including Vegreville in 1857-8, Mestre in 1859-60, Richer in 1861-2, and André in 1864-5. None of these priests assumed this mission as a full-time responsibility but only as an addition to their duties in St. Boniface. When no priest could come the people were again obliged to go to St. François Xavier or to St. Boniface for Mass. The uncertain status of this parish was indicated by the fact that its register of births, marriages and deaths was kept with that of St. Boniface rather than as a separate parish.

In 1859, Taché noted that this mission had a population of 210.[14] By 1860 the Nor'Wester numbered the parishioners of St. Charles at about 250 people.[15] Three years later, the notes sealed in the cornerstone of Taché's new cathedral gave the population of St. Charles as 300, a considerable increase in such a short period of time.[16] The parish still had only the temporary chapel built by Laflèche, no resident priest, and

no school. It functioned much more as an itinerant mission than a fully-organized parish, a fact which was reflected in its lack of structures and the continued references to it as "la petite mission de Saint-Charles".

In 1866, however, a new frame church was built under the supervision of Father Lestanc of St. Boniface, on or near the site of Laflèche's log building. Two years later, Père Joachim Allard, OMI, was appointed as the first resident priest of St. Charles, fourteen years after its first hasty foundation by Laflèche. Although resident at St. Charles, Allard continued to visit the missions of Peguis, Fort Alexander, Lake of the Woods, Fort Frances and Lac Seul.[17] The people of St. Charles probably still left for long periods of time in the summer for the last years of the buffalo hunt from Red River.

Père Allard began the construction of a rectory in 1868 behind the "pretty little church".[18] It is likely that the rectory was used as the school, at least for a time. The Church and house were listed on the site in the survey of 1874, but no school-building was included.

Education

Allard taught classes himself for about forty children, until Brother St. Germain took over the teaching.[19] One of the lay-sisters attached to the Grey Nuns taught school in 1868.[20] She was replaced by the two Misses Ritzdale in 1870.[21] In 1871 the enrolment was thirty-one boys and twenty-one girls,[22] though frequent absenteeism was noted at this school, as at so many others. The room was large, well-lit, and clean, but the furnishings were very poor and the school suffered from a lack of books.

In July 1871 Père Allard held a prize day at the school, which was attended by the newly-elected Commissioners of Education, who took over responsibility for the school thereafter. The language of instruction under this system appears to have been English, since Allard frequently referred in his letters to Taché to the parishioners' desire for a French school.[23]

Despite this completed parish structure, St. Charles was still regarded as marginal. Père Allard preached in both English and French to

the congregation of fifty-five or sixty Catholic families,[24] which suggests that the population structure of St. Charles was already changing from its previous Métis character. Although the mixed-blood population of St. Charles was listed as 329 in 1872,[25] immigrants from Ontario were poised to take over land the Métis had long considered theirs. The parishioners were angry at the influx of people heading to the Rivière aux Islets de Bois (Boyne River), which they had expected to form part of the Métis Reserve. Allard posted signs on the trail warning against trespassing, but to no avail.[26]

The loss of Métis land continued and effectively changed the mission of St. Charles. The population of the parish was 400 in 1879[27] but two years later had declined to 330.[28] Some Quebec families, encouraged by the Catholic Church to emigrate to the west, moved to St. Charles. In 1893 the population was listed as 58 families totalling 308 people, made up of 180 Métis, 76 French-Canadians, 49 English, Irish or Scots, and three Indians.[29]

The foundation of the mission of St. Charles was distinctly different from that of other pre-1870 Roman Catholic missions. While other locations from which to convert the non-Christians were often chosen because of competition from the Anglicans, this mission was begun to serve a population already Catholic. The alternative offered to these Catholic Métis by the Anglican parishes of St. James and Holy Trinity forced Taché to counter with a Catholic mission.

Because it was based on a Métis population largely dependent on the buffalo hunt, St. Charles offered little prospect for growth in the difficult years of the late nineteenth century. Many of the original parishioners moved away, and immigration did not make up the difference. On the other hand, the Anglicans prospered on their sites due to the influx of immigrants from Ontario in the 1870s, which overwhelmed the local population.

Fig. 31 Church at St. Charles,
before the storm of 1884
Archives Deschâtelets, Ottawa

St. Charles became a dependency of St. Mary's, Winnipeg, in the 1870s and served as a country-house retreat for the Oblates. It possessed an excellent garden, which was expected to pay some of its expenses, although St. Mary's subsidized it for a time. By the late 1880s St. Charles had a rectory, a chapel, and a small school, and appeared to have secure, though modest, prospects for future growth and stability.

Notes Saint Charles

1. By 1852 these mixed-bloods lived at Omand's Creek, Sturgeon Creek and as far west as Portage la Prairie. B. Donaldson, "Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Headingley", HRB Report, 1976, p. 1

2. PAM MG3B15, George B. Winship, Ms., Letter of J.H. Ashdown to Winship, 24 March 1914.

3. North West Review 2 September 1905.

4. Information compiled from surveys and Land Register by Dave McLeod, HRB.

5. Parliament of Canada, op. cit. (1859). Statistics taken from Red River, 20 May 1856.

6. Cf. HBCA E5/10-11, Red River Settlement Census, 1840 and 1843.

7. HBCA A11/118, fo. 221d. Eden Colvile to Gov. & Comm., 12 July 1851.

8. Heather Martin and David Smith, "Saint James Anglican Church". HRB Report, 1976.

9. Ibid, p. 15, n. 16.

10. Nor'Wester, 19 February 1862. Cited in B. Donaldson, op. cit., p. 3, n. 18.

11. NAC MG17B4, CCSS Annual Report 1854-5, p. 81. Cited in Tom Boreskie, "The Reverend Griffith Owen Corbett", HRB Report, August 1981.

12. HBCA E6/2, fo. 314 and PAM P1079, HBC Land Register, fo. 92.

13. SHSB, St. Charles Dossier, Picton, "Notes".

14. Missions, Vol. 3, Taché to Dawson, 7 February 1859.

15. Nor'Wester, 28 April 1860.

16. LCSB VIII (1909), p. 108. "Notes sur les Missions de la Rivière-Rouge, April 15, 1863."

17. LCSB XVI (1917), pp. 52-6. "Feu le R.P. Joachim Allard, O.M.I."

18. Missions 1878. Lacombe to Superior-General, 24 December 1877.

19. Missions 1873. Rapport sur le Vicariat de Saint-Boniface.

20. PAA 71.220/210. Maissoneuve to Vegreville, 3 December 1868.

21. PAM MG3D1, Riel papers. Sr. Riel to her sister Marie, 25 October 1870.

22. Rapport...Surintendant des Ecoles Catholiques, 1871.

23. Cf. inter alia, AASB T9496-99. Allard to Taché, 20 October 1871.

24. Rapport sur le Vicariat de Saint-Boniface, Missions, Vol. (1873), pp. 343-4. One Anglophone addition to his parish was the surveyor George McPhillips, along with his wife and 12 children. AASB T12851-8. Allard to Taché, 19 September 1873.

25. AASB T10845. Archibald to Taché, 1872.

26. AASB T8973-5. Allard to Taché, 17 June 1871.

27. Missions 1879, Rapport sur le Vicariat de Saint-Boniface.

28. NAC MG17A22 F840 #10962. Taché to Propagation de la Foi, 16 July 1888.

29. Missions 1893, pp. 336-7. Rapport sur le Vicariat de Saint-Boniface.

Saint Vital

As the Métis population expanded along both sides of the Red River south of St. Boniface after 1824, a settlement developed along a broad elbow of the river, about eight kilometres south of the cathedral. This became the parish of St. Vital, which was important in the history of Manitoba because of its famous residents - Louis Riel, the Nault family and John Bruce. These people attended religious services in St. Boniface or, after 1856, went to St. Norbert.

ALthough they seemed content with this arrangement for church services, the people reacted strongly when they heard that the Grey Nuns had opened a school at St. Norbert, and insisted to Taché that they too should have a school. The Bishop, recognizing the validity of their arguments, began to make the necessary arrangements. The school was to be built on Lot 48, Dominion Land Survey.[1] Taché gave this land and the school building to the Grey Nuns.[2]

St. Vital is an unusual Catholic mission of the pre-1870 period because it began with a school, to which a small chapel was added, and it began in this way at the initiative of the people concerned. Education was always an important aspect of mission activity but usually followed on evangelization proper. Most missions began with visits from a priest. Later, as population grew, a priest would reside at the mission, teach some reading and writing along with catechism lessons and, some time later, establish a formal school. Structural changes accompanied these, as the first hastily-built log house-chapels were replaced by sturdier churches, rectories, and schools.

St. Vital was different, since the residents had belonged to the settled parish of St. Boniface for many years, although they had no religious services or priest in their immediate neighbourhood. The Grey

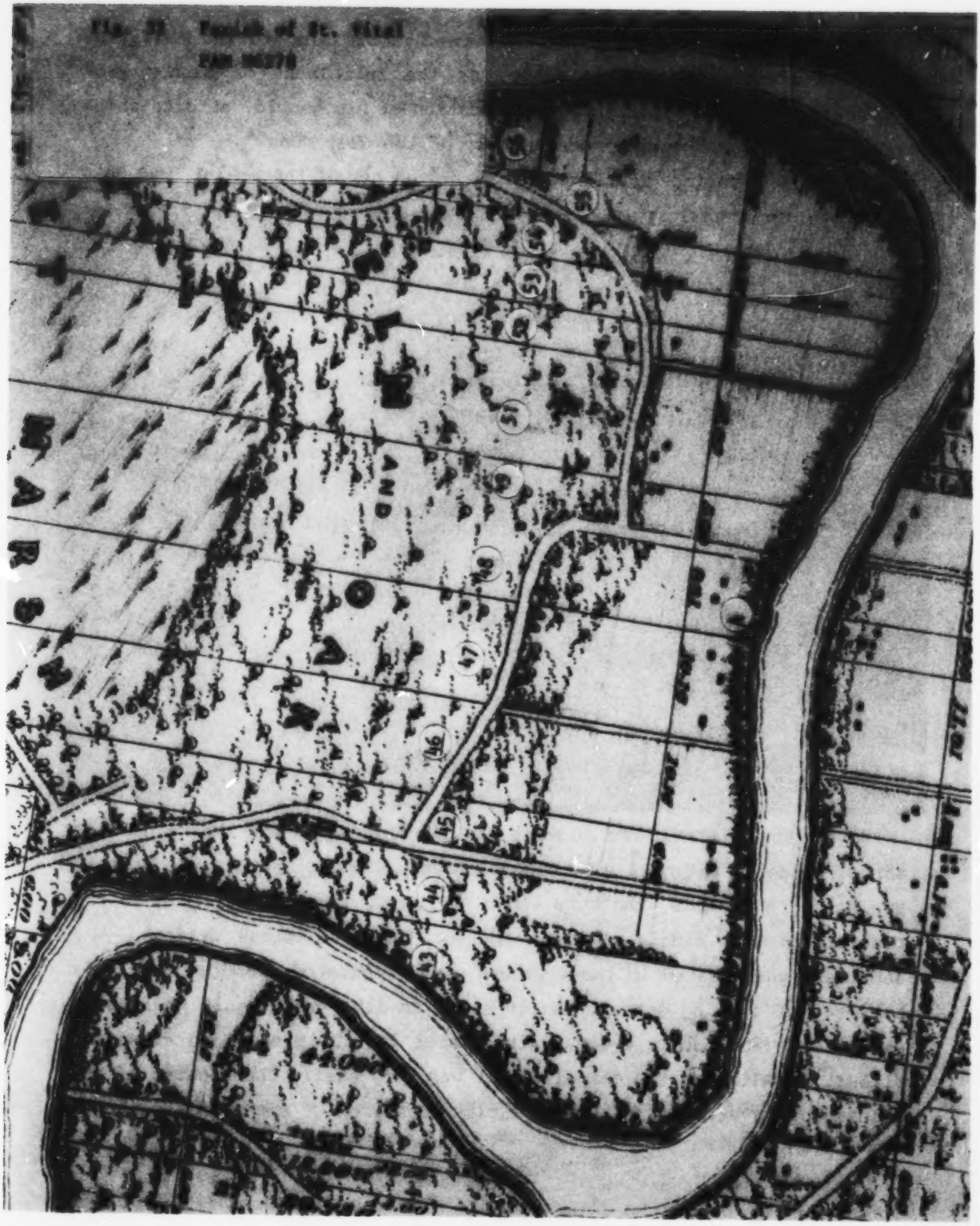
Nuns, who taught at the St. Vital school, preceded the priests by many years. It was to be 1912 before a resident priest was assigned to the parish and by that time population statistics demanded a location on the west side of the Red River.

Taché initiated discussions with the Grey Nuns over the staffing of this proposed school in the winter of 1858-9. The Bishop wanted the nuns to visit the sick as well as to instruct the children - a combination of roles which coincided with the active missionary character of these nuns, although they could not, of course, replace the clergy for religious services. Taché hoped to begin the school in the fall of 1859, but arrangements were not finalized in time. Rev. Mother McMullen, the Superior of the Grey Nuns, who visited Red River in 1859-60, agreed to staff the school with her nuns,[3] but this assignment of personnel took time.

The material for the school was prepared over the winter of 1859 and, in the spring of 1860, work began on a centrally-located school-house, with immediate access to roads, wood and water. The nearby wet marsh provided a good source of hay. The alignment of the road along the southern lot line with another lane on the opposite bank suggests the spot was a regularly-used crossing point. No documentation of a ferry service in the pre-1870 period has been found, but one linked the east and west sides of St. Vital Municipality by 1907.[4]

On September 12, 1860, Bishop Taché blessed the small new school-house, with its thatched roof. It is reasonable to assume that the building was of Red River log construction, with weatherboarding added to the exterior to minimize draughts. Two wings were later added to this school, as its enrolment grew. When completed, the school measured over 158 square metres - "une maison spacieuse et commode (pour le temps d'alors)".[5]

The Métis asked Taché to call the school St. Alexander, after his own patron saint, but the Bishop preferred to name it St. Vital in honour of his auxiliary bishop, Vital Grandin.[6] Classes began on September 18, 1860, with an initial enrolment of more than sixty pupils, some of whom lived on the west bank of the Red River and came to school in rowboats.[7]



Taché attended the opening day and gave his blessing to the children. He spoke eloquently of this school as the fulfilment of Bishop Provencher's dedicated efforts to the education of his people, efforts which had succeeded when he obtained the help of the Grey Nuns.[8]

Sister L'Esperance Youville, the first teacher at the school, had only temporary help until November, when Sister Ethier joined her. The nuns lived in the small school until their separate convent was built. They probably slept either upstairs or in the classroom. The sisters stayed at St. Vital for five days each week; they spent Wednesdays and Saturdays in St. Boniface to attend Mass and receive Communion. Taché gave them a horse and carriage to use for these trips, but the journey was a hardship for the nuns.

The infrequency of their attendance at Mass was a heavier burden, although for a brief time the St. Vital school had a regular Sunday Mass. The fire which destroyed St. Boniface Cathedral in December, 1860, left the Bishop with no place large enough for the whole congregation. The men of St. Boniface gathered in the College for Mass, while the women went to the Grey Nuns' Hospital.[9] The residents of St. Vital too were parishioners of this church and directly affected by its loss. A priest went each Sunday and holy day from the bishop's house to say Mass in St. Vital until regular services at St. Boniface resumed. Some of the families preferred going to St. Norbert for Mass, perhaps because of limited space at St. Vital.[10]

Over the winter, the sisters prepared a small sanctuary in the school-house to serve as a permanent chapel, where priests could come to say Mass. With this, the nuns would no longer have to travel in to St. Boniface in the middle of the week for their religious duties. The sanctuary was located in the southern wing, separated from the main body by a set of folding doors. Inside stood an altar with small shelves on either side and two prie-dieus with chairs for the Bishop and attending priest.[11] Although the chapel itself was very small, the opening of the folding doors extended it into the classroom area of the main section to

Fig. 33 Sister Connelly and Sister L'Espérance Youville
Grey Nuns Archives, St. Boniface

provide space for those attending. Bishop Taché opened this chapel with Mass on April 4, 1861;[12] from that time, the sisters could usually depend on having a Mass said there twice a week, often by Taché himself. He rode out even in the depth of winters for this purpose.

The chapel was in use a very short time before the severe flooding of the spring of 1861 suspended all the services at the St. Vital school. When the nuns returned to St. Boniface, over roads covered with water, they asked for help to secure the school-building from the flood-waters. Taché himself rode out on horseback and nailed boards across all the windows. Having removed the Blessed Sacrament from the chapel, he set off back to St. Boniface, followed by the nuns in their carriage. By then the water was so high that it came into the carriage. The building survived the flood, although it required some repairs before classes and religious services could resume.

The presence of the Blessed Sacrament enabled the nuns to spend Monday to Friday at St. Vital, and return to their convent in St. Boniface only on weekends. The school-chapel became a centre for community prayers, with the parents of the children gathering in the evenings to recite the Rosary. Whenever a priest was able to say Mass at St. Vital, while en route to St. Boniface or St. Norbert, Sister Talon simply rang the bell and within a quarter of an hour a crowd would gather.[13] Taché said Mass as frequently as possible in St. Vital, arriving in the early morning and using the opportunity to give instruction during Mass to the people, who came in large numbers to hear their bishop. In 1868, Mr. Giroux was assigned to say Mass every Thursday in St. Vital. A more settled parish structure was beginning to take shape.

A stable was built in 1861 to house the nuns' horse and carriage. The nuns also started a large garden that year and a separate small convent was built. With all these improvements, the mission of St. Vital appeared to be "a little paradise" to some, although others, including Sister Ethier, found it very isolated.[14] The Grey Nuns often used the convent at St. Vital as a holiday haven, a little "Chateauguay", similar to the

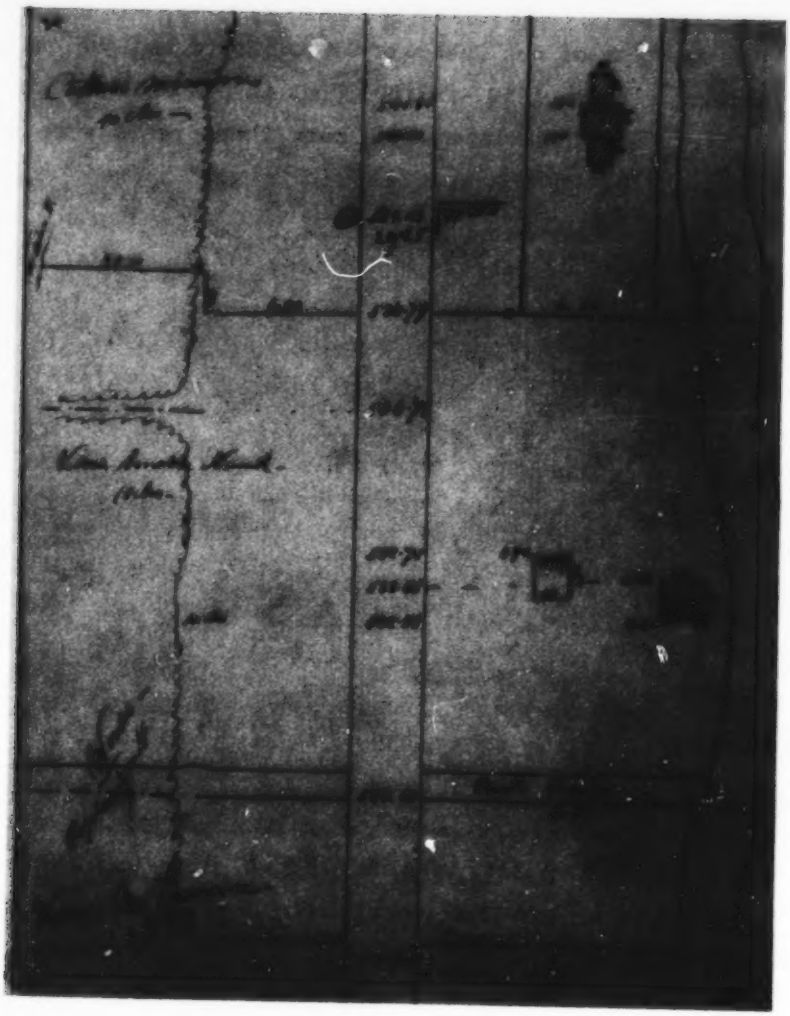


Fig. 34 Parish of Saint Vital, 1871-2, D.S. Baudry
PAM N1005

original retreat for their mother-house in Montreal.

Despite these additions to the St. Vital mission, the enrolment of the school did not appear to change very much through the 1860s but remained steady at from fifty to sixty boys and girls. After 1870 the school came under the jurisdiction of the Catholic School Board and the enrolment increased, reaching a high of 107 in 1881, but it had declined to 46 in the spring of 1889.[15] The Superintendents over these years were uniform in their praise for this school and held it up as an exemplary model of teaching and discipline. St. Vital School and the other schools of the Grey Nuns in St. Boniface Diocese won prizes at the Colonial Exhibition in London in 1887.[16]

According to the chronicles of the Grey Nuns, when the reasons which had led to the foundation of the school disappeared, the school was closed in 1887. Yet it continued to be listed as one of the Catholic schools taught by the Grey Nuns until 1890, both in the reports of the Superintendents of Catholic schools and in the lists printed in the North-West Review. It appears likely that the school closed after the 1890 Manitoba School Act ended funding for Catholic schools. Mager school,[17] which opened in St. Vital East c. 1888, may have drawn some of the former pupils and made St. Vital less viable and less necessary. It was probably the school attended by Louis Riel's son.[18]

The population, which it was designed to serve, had largely moved away after 1870, part of the exodus of so many Métis families to the farther west. In a small community like St. Vital, the loss of even a few families was felt severely. For a parish based primarily on a school, the departure of the children of these families would be devastating. The remaining children were forced to find other schools, perhaps in St. Boniface. In 1897 a St. Vital school was again begun, but on the west side of the Red River, because of the growth of population there.[19]

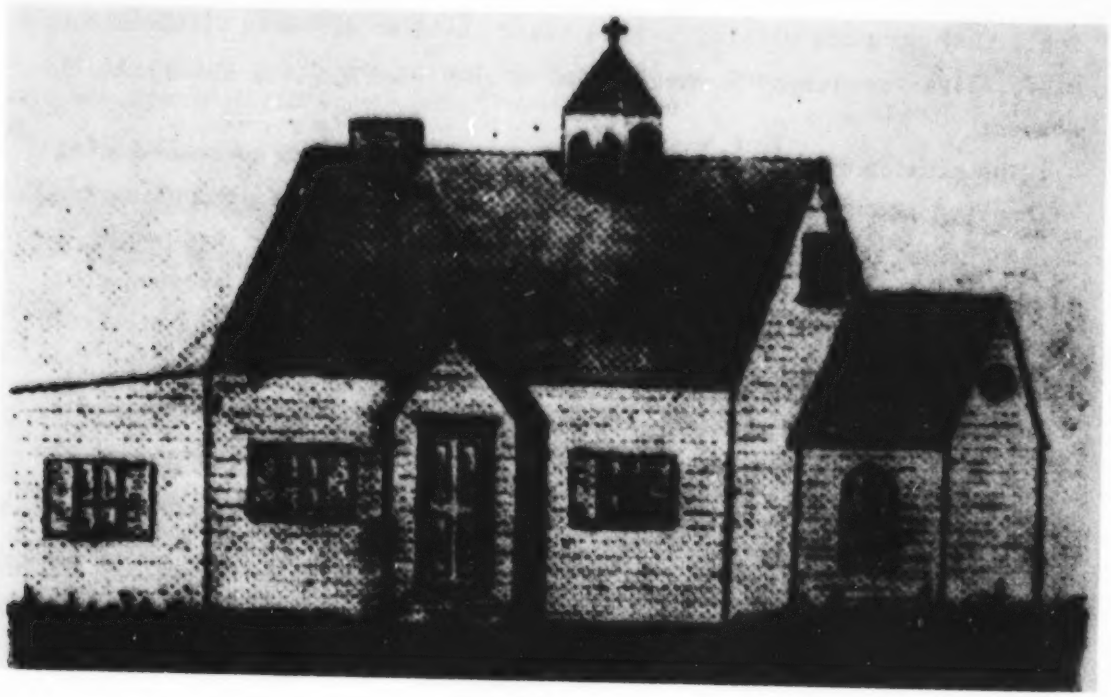


Fig. 35 Chapel-School of St. Vital
Grey Nuns Archives, St. Boniface

In its thirty years of existence, St. Vital demonstrated the ability of Catholic missions to adapt to very specific needs. The people of this area had felt more deprived of education for their children than they did of other pastoral services. They could travel with relative ease to St. Boniface or St. Norbert for Mass, which made it unnecessary and unlikely for a priest to be stationed at St. Vital. While they would accept this fact, they were not willing to have their children deprived of education, especially when a school was founded in the neighbouring parish of St. Norbert.

The mission of St. Vital also illustrates the growing awareness by the bishops of the function of education as an auxiliary to evangelization. Taché judged that the Catholic education of the Métis was vital to preserve them in the faith which had been brought to them at such cost, especially in view of the changes which were about to alter the structure of Red River society. These made it imperative that the Church provide a general education, similar to that given in the Protestant schools, which would enable its parishioners to function in that society. At the same time, the students received a solid grounding in the principles of their faith, which helped them preserve that faith in the pluralistic society of the late nineteenth century.

St. Vital also epitomizes the role of nuns as missionaries in the nineteenth century, especially the distinctive function of the Grey Nuns in the West. They acted as educators to the children, in both secular and religious instruction, and cared for the sick of the community. They looked after the small chapel, preparing it for the weekly Masses, and calling the people to come on other occasions. In fact, they were the representatives of the Church in this mission, much more intensively than the non-resident priests could ever be.

Notes Saint Vital

1. RG15DII Manitoba Act Grant Files.

2. PAM MG7D2, Manuscript Chronicles of Grey Nuns, p. 303.

3. Archives de la Maison Provinciale des Soeurs Grises, Chronique des Soeurs Grises de Montréal, Vol. 2, pp. 97-99. Reference courtesy of Diane Payment, Environment Canada Parks.

4. The St. Vital Lance, 10 September 1970, p. 10. See also PAM RG17D2 #271 the field notebook of D.S. Baudry (1871) and PAM RG17D2 #555, field notebook of George McPhillips (1873).

5. PAM MG7D2, Manuscript Chronicles of Grey Nuns, 10 September 1861. "a house which was spacious and convenient (for that time)."

6. Dom Paul Benoît, Vie de Mgr. Taché, p. 421.

7. Centenary Celebrations of the Parish of Saint Vital, September 1961.

8. PAM MG7D2, Manuscript Chronicles of Grey Nuns, p. 302.

9. PAM MG7D13, Belleau Collection. Mestre to M.M., June 11, 1861.

10. Archives Soeurs Grises, Montreal. Mémoires de St. Boniface, Vol. I, 1843-61. Sr. Valade to M. Deschamps, Hôpital Général St. Boniface, March 10, 1859. Reference courtesy of Diane Payment, Parks Canada.

11. PAM MG7D2. Ms. Chronicles of Grey Nuns,

12. AASB T53524-34, Lestanc à mon cher ami, June 11, 1861.

13. PAM MG7D2. Ms. Chronicles of Grey Nuns.

14. Ibid, p. 317.

15. Rapports du Surintendant des Ecoles Catholiques, 1871-89.

16. PAM MG7D2, Manuscript Chronicles of Grey Nuns, p. 352.

17. St. Vital East school is included in the reports of the Catholic School Superintendent. The name Mager was applied to it also (information courtesy of Corinne Tellier).

18. Courtesy of Diane Payment, notes.

19. Centenary Celebrations, p. 11.

Ste. Anne des Chênes

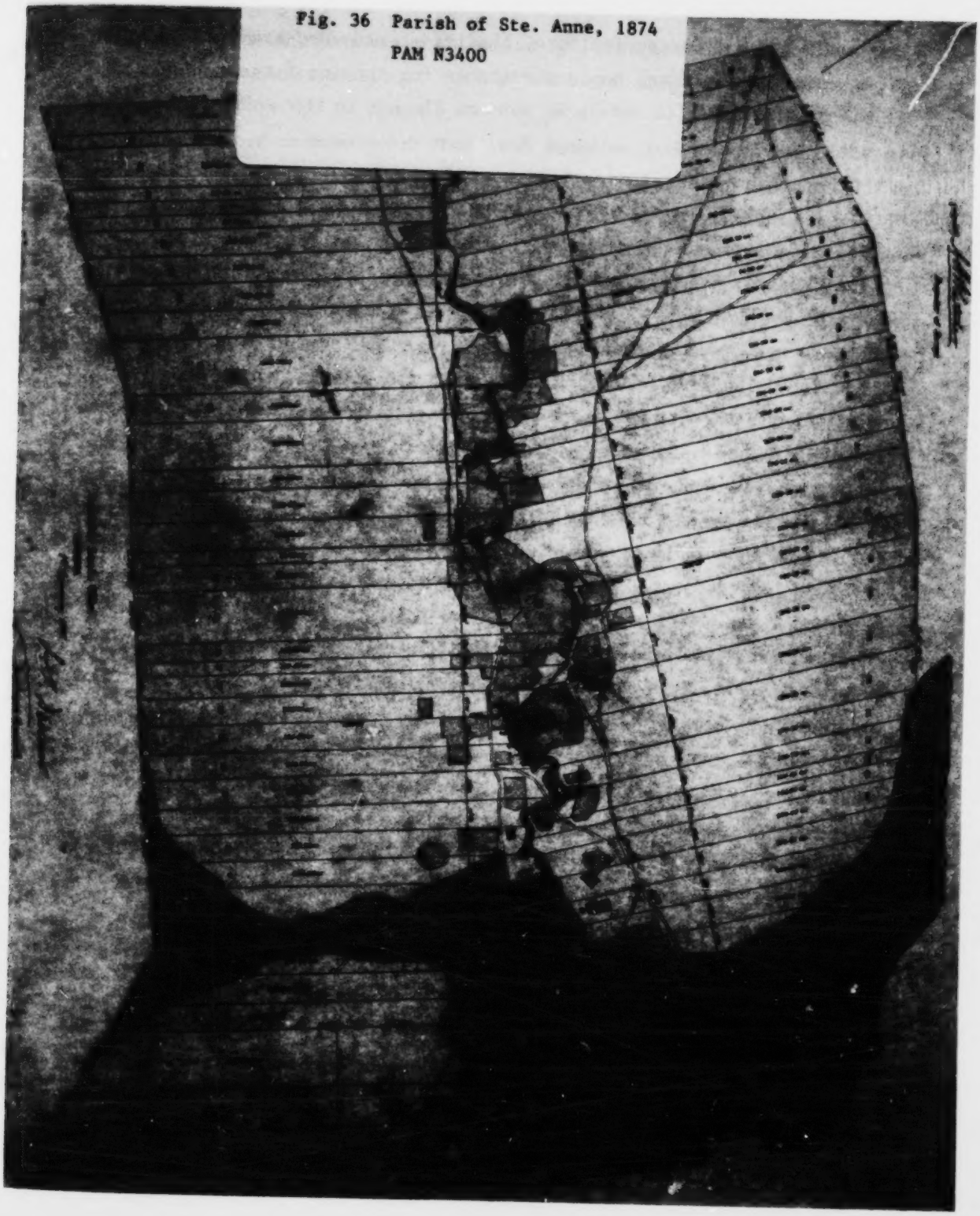
The community of Ste. Anne des Chênes lies along the Seine River, 50 kms southeast of Winnipeg. To the east of Pointe des Chênes a vast area of swamp and heavy forest extended to Lake of the Woods. The abundant forest, known to the Métis as "l'épinettière", provided lumber for construction and was also rich in game. These qualities made it attractive to the Métis as a place to live.

In spite of its bountiful resources, it was only in the 1850s that permanent settlement began to take place at this point. No organized movement to the area occurred and documentation is sparse about individual inhabitants. Father Pierre Picton speculated that the very serious flooding of 1852, which caused many of the Métis to take refuge on the prairie, may have sent some of them to Pointe des Chênes.[1] The residents of Red River established new settlements along the Assiniboine River from 1852 to 1860 for the same reason. Increased population pressure on the river lots was another incentive for such moves.

The first documented evidence of settlement in the area is found in the reports of the Dawson and Hind exploratory survey of the west, made for the Canadian government in 1857-58. One of the essential tasks of this survey was to find a connecting route to Canada. In pursuit of this objective, Assistant Surveyor Jas. A. Dickson was sent to determine if the German Creek, as the Seine River was then known, might provide a connection to Lake of the Woods. In the course of his journey, he camped near the home of Jean Baptiste Perrault dit Morin,[2] later nicknamed "Père Morin".

Morin had probably been a resident of St. Boniface, who had relocated after the flood of 1852. He settled on what came to be known as Lot 19 of the Ste. Anne survey. The presence of a few other houses nearby indicated the beginnings of a settlement. Conditions there were ideal.

Fig. 36 Parish of Ste. Anne, 1874
PAM N3400



The land was good for agriculture, the forest provided oak for construction, wood for fuel, and poplars suitable for fencing.[3] Dickson's praise of the possibilities of this area was one element in the eventual decision to build the Dawson Road through Ste. Anne des Chênes.

Other than the Morin family, those resident at Pointe des Chênes in 1858 were Métis who made their living primarily from hunting, with agriculture as a secondary subsistence base.[4] One of the pioneers was François Nolin; his brother Charles joined the settlement by 1860, as did others of the family.[5] A substantial marsh, which lay between their homes and the mouth of the Seine, made travel virtually impossible at times of high water. The development of commercial agriculture, which depended on Red River as a market, was hampered by these conditions. The distance and the lack of good roads also meant that visits to St. Boniface for religious services were necessarily few and far between.

In the winter of 1858 Père Simonet went to the settlement to offer his services to the family of Basile Lawrence, who had lost a child. This was the first recorded visit by a priest to the area, and it has been assumed the funeral Mass was said in the Lawrence home.

After the flood of 1861, several farmers of St. Boniface decided to move to Ste. Anne.[6] This increased population led Bishop Taché to recognize the need for a more decided Church presence there, although the area could not yet claim to be a settled parish. These settlers were experienced farmers; this would pave the way for the stability required for a parish. Taché was impressed by the possibilities of this centre and asked his old friend and colleague, Mr. Laflèche, to consider returning to the west to help out in the new small parishes being formed in his diocese, like Pointe des Chênes, where Laflèche's poor health would not be strained.[7] Laflèche resisted this entreaty, however, and remained in Quebec, where he later became Bishop of Trois Rivières.

In 1861 the mission of St. Alexander, named after Taché's patron saint, was founded at Pointe des Chênes.[8] Père Joseph Lefloch remained stationed at St. Boniface but was to visit the residents of Pointe des Chênes at least once a month. When he visited he stayed in Morin's home and said Mass, as well as filling the other responsibilities of his

ministry. The mission was also served by Pères Lestanc, Tissot, and St. Germain, who made occasional visits when the usual priest was unavailable.

The lumber resources of the area were well-known and used by the Diocese of St. Boniface, perhaps from the time when Provencher was building his first cathedral in the 1830s. Mr. Thibault spent much of the winter of 1862-63 in the woods near Pointe des Chênes supervising a number of parishioners from St. François Xavier in preparing the wood to rebuild the cathedral. This labour proved pointless when a forest fire destroyed all the lumber, which had been left in the cutting area until the roads improved.[9]

Père Mestre[10] claimed that the Sauteux set this fire deliberately, in concert with an Anglican minister, to prevent the Catholics from beginning a settlement. The Sauteux resented the Métis occupation of the land and had asked the Métis to pay for it. If they did not, the Sauteux claimed they would sell their land to the Reverend, who had promised them a generous payment. The Métis ignored these threats and continued their cultivation of the land and exploitation of the woods for lumber and for game.

Whether or not there was any substance to Mestre's linkage of the fire to a plot between the Sauteux and the Anglicans, his accusations reveal the level of suspicion which prevailed between the denominations at Red River by the 1860s. His letter also displays the existence of an unexpected animosity between the Sauteux and the Métis, caused, in all probability, by the Métis decision to begin a settled agricultural life on Sauteux hunting territory. The Canadian surveyor John Snow used this antagonism to his own advantage in 1868-9 when he was at Pointe des Chênes.

By 1863 the population of this mission was 180,[11] enough to justify more protracted visits by the priests. Lefloch began to construct a chapel next door to Morin's house the following year, because Morin's home could no longer accommodate the growing population. Very likely this church was of the usual Red River construction, with logs secured from the nearby forest, covered with weatherboarding. Although Lefloch

initiated work on this chapel in 1864, it remained unfinished for many years.

The chapel was opened briefly in the summer of 1866 but was closed again after the harvest. As yet it had no windows; Bishop Grandin and Mr. Ritchot were to bring the required 110 panes of glass from Quebec.[12] A bell for the church had been ordered but had not arrived in St. Paul, Minnesota, when Charles Nolin went to bring it up by cart. With the delay in its arrival and the installation of the windows, it was January 20, 1867, before Bishop Taché was able to bless the church and dedicate it to St. Alexander.[13] Within six months it was renamed Ste. Anne. Père Lefloch evidently suggested that St. Alexander would be more appropriate for the mission at Fort Alexander. The fact that Lefloch was a Breton and Ste. Anne was the patron saint of the Bretons and of French Canada were also justifications for the change.[14]

The site for the church, on the south bank of the river on land belonging to Morin, caused some jealousy among the residents. Most of the population lived on the north side; Mme. Augustin Nolin gave part of Lot 56 to the mission,[15] and Charles Nolin urged Lefloch to move the chapel there. Lefloch refused, accusing Nolin of petty jealousy. He advised the people who wanted the chapel relocated to build one themselves and then he would see whether or not to move and what to do with the first chapel.[16]

In 1868 Louis Raymond Giroux replaced Lefloch as visiting missionary at Ste. Anne's. He had arrived in St. Boniface that year as a newly-ordained priest, the only secular priest from Quebec who responded to Taché's appeal for help in his new parishes. Because Giroux taught at St. Boniface College and also took charge of both St. Vital and Ste. Anne, he could only visit Ste. Anne one Sunday per month, although the mission by that time had grown to include about forty families.[17]

Giroux arrived at a time of great change for Ste. Anne. The Canadian government began work on the Dawson Road and on a survey of the North West, which it expected to acquire from the HBC. Both activities focused on Ste. Anne during the years 1868-9. The presence of the priest at that time could be expected to have considerable impact on events surrounding the Métis unrest over land in the face of the Canadian interventions.

Fig. 37 Charles Nolin, M.L.A. Ste. Anne, 1874

PAM

When the crops at Red River were completely destroyed by locusts in 1868 and every other food resource failed, many people were threatened with starvation. Private organizations in Canada responded to the appeals for help which came from Red River and sent food and money. A Relief Committee was set up at Red River to distribute this aid to those most in need. Governor William Mactavish estimated that 2346 persons were in dire need of assistance, while the cases of 243 people were somewhat doubtful.[18] The parishes in most need of help were the Catholic Métis settlements.

Rather than giving money or food directly to the settlement, the Canadian government decided to begin construction of the Dawson Road. This would be mutually beneficial to the Canadian government and to the people of Red River:

> while furnishing the inhabitants of Red River with the means of earning money, [it] would at the same time be establishing a Public Work in their vicinity of admitted necessity to the Dominion in view of its future acquisition of the North-West Territory.[19]

This work centred on Pointe des Chênes. Because of this wage labour opportunity, the local Métis did not require help from the Relief Committee, unlike the other French Catholic parishes.[20]

John Snow was sent to supervise the construction of this road. Although he hired some of the local people, he also brought in a number of employees from Ontario, among whom was Thomas Scott. This soon developed into an explosive situation. The wages paid by Snow were considered to be too low; they were not given in cash but in provisions[21] purchased from a store begun in the settlement by one of his Canadian friends, Dr. John C. Schultz, who was abhorred by the Métis.

Snow's survey for the road cut across the old boundaries laid out by Roger Goulet for the Council of Assiniboia and caused great concern over land titles. The Métis discontent grew during the winter of 1868-69 when they learned that Snow had bought the land on which they lived from the Sauteux, a sale made easier when Snow sold them liquor.[22] Charles Mair, another friend of Snow's who was also employed at Ste. Anne's, published insulting letters about the Métis in the Toronto Globe. When the people

of Ste. Anne's heard of this, they banded together and forced Snow and Mair to leave their settlement. Although Mair asked Bishop Taché to intervene with the Métis on his behalf, he refused to do so.[23] Snow was summoned to appear on two counts of selling liquor to the Sauteux at Pointe des Chênes,[24] but was not called to account for his dealings in land.

In 1869, however, Snow returned to Ste. Anne to continue work on the road. He built a big two-storey house, intending to use it later as a hotel for immigrants using the road.[25] He expected a large town, to be called Redpath[26] to develop, and was prepared to profit from this opportunity. Again he hired the Métis of Ste. Anne to work on the road "on reasonable terms", although he noted that "the French halfbreed population are particularly very troublesome and no doubt the sooner a strong force is organized here the better".[27]

But Snow had more trouble with his hired Canadians than he did with the Métis. The Canadian workers struck for higher wages and stayed off work three days, until Snow agreed to ask the Minister of Public Works for more money. When they were to be paid off at the end of their work, these men insisted that Snow pay them for the three days they had taken off. Though he refused at first, when they dragged him out and threatened to drown him in the Seine River, he agreed to their demands. Later he had them arrested for violence against him.[28] After the uprising of 1869 began, Snow found it difficult to find Métis labour but did manage to hire some of the settlers from Ste. Anne on individual short contracts. They proved willing to do the work required of them.[29]

The Canadian Minister of Public Works, William McDougall, sent Lieutenant-Colonel J.S. Dennis in 1869 to begin the survey of the Red River area, before it was formally taken over by Canada. Dennis was ordered to begin his survey at Oak Point, and to confer with Governor Mactavish of the HBC and with Snow, "especially as to the character of the country about Oak Point and its suitability for immediate settlement".[30] This small settlement had already assumed considerable importance in the planning of the new Dominion, as it prepared to annex the North West. William Mactavish, Governor of the colony, protested to the London Board

of the HBC about their decision to sanction surveys of the country before the actual transfer. Mactavish thought "the whole land question is fruitful of future troubles".[31] He expected that the mixed-bloods and Indians would assert their right to the land and perhaps stop the surveys until their claim was satisfied.

Mactavish' predictions proved only too true. The fact that Dennis stayed with Dr. Schultz heightened the Métis suspicions. His men were accused of marking out private claims of land in the settlement of Ste. Anne[32] and he was expected to choose the best land for the people from Ontario who would move west the next spring. This was a well-founded suspicion. Dennis wrote to McDougall in praise of the "unsurpassed fertility" of the land at Oak Point Settlement and of the advantages given it by its combination of prairie fields with forests to supply wood for fuel and construction. He recommended that a town plan should be laid out and "not a lot granted except to an actual settler".[33]

When the surveyors went to Ste. Anne des Chênes, they were accused of being "Orangeistes", who had treated Catholics badly in Ontario and now sought to do the same in the West. They were told that, if "Upper Canada" negotiated with the Métis for Confederation and accepted their conditions, the surveyors would be able to come, but not before.[34] The land at Ste. Anne, a very recent settlement, was of as much concern to the Métis as was that of Red River, and the intrusion of the surveyors was equally unwelcome.

The prevalence of attitudes derived from previous experience in the French-Catholic versus English-Protestant struggles of Quebec and Ontario was striking. The surveyors represented the Ontario expansionist attitude, while the Métis, aided by the priests from Quebec, attempted to preserve their French and Catholic heritage. Control of the land was vital to the aspirations of both sides.

In 1869 the 28 heads of families of Ste. Anne petitioned Taché to assign a resident priest to them.[35] Whether this petition had any connection with the arrival of Snow and the surveyors in the community is unknown. It could be expected that this contributed to the desire of the people of Ste. Anne's to have a more formalized parish structure, which

Fig. 38 Parish of Ste. Anne, 1872
PAM Surveyor's Notebook #554

would help them assert their own vision of their community, as opposed to Snow's ideas of a new town called Redpath peopled by Ontario settlers. Although this petition represented over 200 people,[36] Taché was unable to respond to their wishes immediately. He was absent from Red River to attend the Vatican Council of 1869-70 and, when he returned, the Riel uprising preoccupied him.

On September 1, 1870, Taché appointed Giroux as resident priest at Ste. Anne. Giroux had acted as chaplain to Louis Riel's Provisional Government and Taché probably thought it wiser to station him among the Métis of Ste. Anne, away from the bad feelings engendered within the Red River Settlement by the Riel uprising. The priest remained at Ste. Anne for the next 41 years, until his death in 1911. He also had responsibility for the surrounding settlements of Lorette, Richer, and Ste. Geneviève.

Giroux began his work as resident priest on September 15, 1870 and soon prepared a house for himself. He chose to build this house on the land allotted to the mission by the Nolin family, apparently convinced that this was the most convenient site. He moved into his new house on December 31, 1870 and for two years he lived there alone, taking his meals with the Valiquette family.[37] Giroux said the weekday Mass in the rectory, and the Sunday Mass in the chapel on the other side of the river.[38]

The rectory, built of squared red tamarack, suffered from the perennial construction difficulties of Red River architecture. Frost caused the wood to shrink and the mortar to fall out. Giroux spent a very cold first winter in his house.[39] In 1872 an office and bedroom were added and the old chapel was relocated to the same lot.

In 1878 Giroux opened a new, larger church, which, although never very secure, served the community for twenty years.

Education

The role of the priests in education at Ste. Anne was a secondary one. Because they made only brief visits to the community before 1870, they were unable to follow the usual practice of beginning a school. Rosalie Gauthier (née Germain),[40] who lived at Ste. Anne from 1866 until 1872,

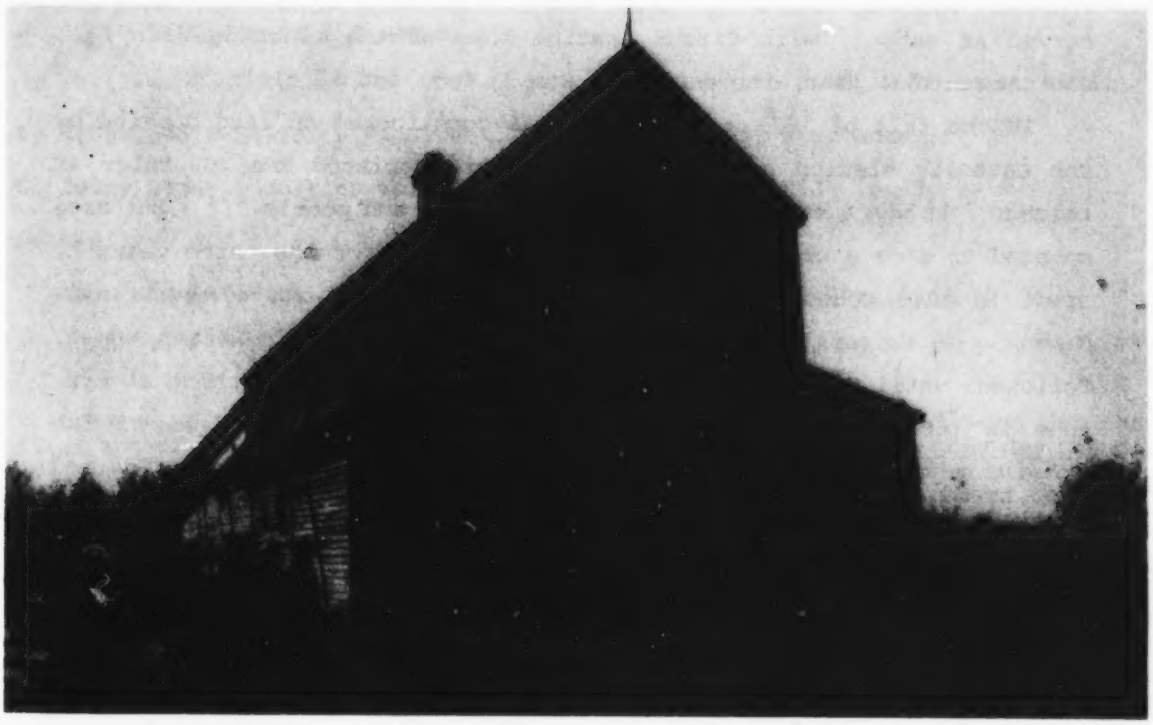


Fig. 39 Ste. Anne des Chênes Church, 1898
PAM N3997

began the first school, teaching the children during the day and the adults in the evening. Until Giroux built his rectory, she taught in her own home while the neighbours helped look after her large family. She was to be paid 25 cents per month per child but, in fact, received her wages in the form of local food.[41] The number of pupils in the school in these early years was about fifty. The old chapel built by Lefloch on Morin's lot served as school-house from 1869-70. In January 1871, the rectory served as school, with Giroux sharing some of the teaching with Mme. Gauthier. That year, the enrolment was 32 boys and 18 girls.[42]

In the fall of 1873 a new school was constructed on land donated by the Catholic Mission and M. Theophilus Paré replaced Mme. Gauthier as teacher. It was a ramshackle house - cold, low, and poorly-lit - but Paré managed to give a good education to the children for the three years he spent in this school. He lived in the rectory and shared meals with Giroux. A succession of different lay teachers, both men and women, followed, until Giroux convinced the Grey Nuns to begin teaching at Ste. Anne in 1883. Under their direction, Ste. Anne's became one of the largest schools in the St. Boniface diocese. The larger population and greater prosperity of the community were reflected in the educational facilities. By 1888 there were 200 children in three schools.[43]

The parish of Ste. Anne represents a successful effort by the Diocese of St. Boniface to serve a population located beyond the immediate vicinity of the Red and Assiniboine rivers. Lefloch's monthly visits and the chapel he built sustained a foothold in the community, until it could form and maintain a parish structure. While its agricultural base was being developed, the community faced the benefits and strains imposed on it by the construction and use of the Dawson Road. The appointment of Giroux as resident priest in 1870 was well-timed to help the local population and subsequent French Catholic newcomers withstand the political, religious and demographic changes of the 1870s and 1880s.[44]

Notes Ste. Anne

1. SHSB. Dossier Ste. Anne. Abbé Pierre Picton to Père Parent of Ste. Anne.

2. Perrault or Morin was born in Lower Canada in 1799, and had come west shortly after Provencher and Dumoulin in 1818. He married his French-Canadian bride, Marie Charron-Ducharme, in 1822 at St. Boniface. He died in May 1874 with Giroux' prayers that God would render him the same kind of good services that he had given the missionaries serving Ste. Anne. Cf. Giroux to Taché, 1 May 1874. Cited in Paroisse de Ste. Anne, pp. 377-8.

3. Parliament of Canada, op. cit., Jas. A. Dickson to Hind, 2 November 1858.

4. AASB T53676-54138. L.R. Giroux, Codex historicus, Ste. Anne.

5. Jerry Lemay, "Charles Nolin Bourgeois Métis 1837-1907", p. 5.

6.Ibid.

7. Taché to Laflèche, 28 March 1859. Cited in Paroisse Ste. Anne, p. 27.

8. LCSB VIII (1909), p. 108. "Notes sur les Missions de la Rivière-Rouge", 15 April 1863.

9. LCSB Vol. 1 (1902) refers to Thibault leading a party to cut wood for the first cathedral in the woods near Ste. Anne. In Paroisse de Ste. Anne des Chênes 1876-1976, p. 1, this activity is assumed to have occurred for the building of Taché's cathedral in 1862-63. Lestanc's account of this fire appears to refer to Pointe de Chêne (Lake Manitoba), which was also called "l'épinettière", provided much of the lumber for the settlers at Red River, and appears a more likely site for Thibault and the parishioners of St. François Xavier to cut wood. Père Mestre also reported on this fire, and placed it at Ste. Anne. Perhaps the fire extended to both places.

10. AASB T53647-50. Mestre to a friend in France, 5 June 1863.

11. LCSB VIII (1909), p. 108. "Notes sur les Missions de la Rivière-Rouge", 15 April 1863.

12. AASB Lefloch to Taché, 14 August 1866.

13. Paroisse Ste. Anne, p. 20.

14. LCSB V (1906), p. 66.

15. Registre Paroissiale de Saint Boniface. In Paroisse Ste. Anne, p. 28.

16. LCSB XXXVI (1937), p. 106. Lefloch to Taché, 12 November 1868.

17. Canada, Sessional Papers, Vol. III(1870), J.S. Dennis to Wm. McDougall.

18. HBCA A12/45, fo. 728. Wm. Mactavish to London, 1 December 1868.

19. Canada, Sessional Papers, Vol. III, No. 1 (1870), p. 45.

20. Cf. PAM MG2B6-1, Executive Relief Committee Meeting, 18 November 1868.

21. Canada, Sessional Papers, Vol. III(1870), John Snow to Wm. McDougall, 4 May 1869.

22. PAM MG3D1, Riel Papers, #531. ?

23. Paroisse Ste. Anne, pp. 13-14.

24. PAM MG2C14 #364. A.W. Ross to Jas. Ross, 15 February 1869.

25. Ibid.

26. Cf. PAM MG12B2, fo. 197. N. Nord to Chief Justice Wood, 10 November 1876.

27. PAM MG3B2. McDougall, William, 1869. John A. Snow to Wm. McDougall, 8 September 1869.

28. Canada, Sessional Papers, Vol. III(1870), John Snow to Wm. McDougall, 6 October 1869.

29. Ibid., John Snow to Minister of Public Works, 21 February 1870.

30. PAM MG3B2, McDougall Papers. Wm. McDougall to Lt. Col. Dennis, 10 July 1869.

31. HBCA A12/45, fo. 280-280d. Wm. Mactavish to London, 10 August 1869.

32. HBCA A12/45, fo. 288d-289. Wm. Mactavish to London, 7 September 1869.

33. Canada, Sessional Papers, Vol. III(1870). J.S. Dennis to Wm. McDougall.

34. PAM MG3B5, Excerpt from Dugas to Taché, 24 & 31 August 1869.

35. LCSB XXXVIII (1939), pp. 297-8. "Petition datée du 9 Janvier 1869".

36. Mixed-blood population in 1872 was 249. AASB T10845. Archibald to Taché, 1872.

37. Mme. Valiquette was Ursule Grenier, who had been brought from Quebec in 1838 by the Hudson's Bay Company to teach the women of the Red River Settlement to make cloth and wool. After the destruction of this school, she was housekeeper for Bishop Provencher until the Grey Nuns arrived in 1844.

38. AASB T8595-97. Giroux to Taché, 27 March 1871.

39. Paroisse Ste. Anne, pp. 35, 208-9; L.A. Prud'homme, Louis Raymond Giroux, p. 44; Codex Historicus.

40. She had been orphaned in Quebec, raised and educated by the Sisters of Providence until she married Jean Baptiste Gauthier at the age of 16. She taught at St. Philomène for several years and then moved west with her family. She taught one year in St. Paul, Minnesota and then arrived at St. Boniface where her husband worked as a mason and she taught as assistant to the Grey Nuns. In 1862 she was asked, probably by Taché, to move to Lorette to teach school and did this from 1862-66 and from 1873-95. Cf. LCSB LV (1956), pp. 97-100.

41. Paroisse Ste. Anne, pp. 371-76 and LCSB, LV, pp. 97-100.

42. Rapport, Surintendant des Ecoles Catholiques, 1871.

43. LCSB XIV (1915) p. 175. Rapport, Taché, 1888.

44. In the census of the parish by Giroux on 2 March 1876 the population was 473, consisting of 76 families. This number included a few Protestants. Cf. AASB T53676-T53699. By 1880 there were 131 families. Cf. AASB, T53742.

Fort Alexander

Bas de la Rivière, the NWC post located at the mouth of the Winnipeg River, later renamed Fort Alexander, was an exceptionally beautiful site, with many advantages. Near an abundant fishery on Lake Winnipeg, the post also possessed excellent soil for agriculture. The farm afforded an importance to this NWC post which outweighed its fur trade and its appearance reflected this fact. An elegant house situated on a medium--sized hill was surrounded by stables, storehouses, and fields of barley, peas, oats, and potatoes.[1] In 1812, these gardens supplied vegetables to the incoming Red River settlers; in 1817, it supplied much-needed seed to Red River. Bas de la Rivière also had a horse-powered flour mill in 1815. Evidently, the amount of wheat grown was substantial enough that the NWC considered it worth the investment in a mill.[2] Bas de la Rivière became an important provision depot along the main transportation route of the North West Company's trading system and hosted large parties of Canadian voyageurs on their way to and from the fur country.

Most of these men were of French descent and obvious candidates for the ministry of the Catholic priests from their base at Red River. Plessis, Bishop of Quebec, intended that the priests he sent to the West should care for the NWC servants as well as those of the HBC and avoid becoming entangled in the fur trade rivalry. Provencher and Dumoulin visited the post at Bas de la Rivière on their way to Red River in 1818 and were well-received by the Nor'westers. While there, they baptised sixteen children. On leaving, they met a fur brigade of 150 men on their way to Rainy Lake from the Athabasca country, and promised to see them the following year.[3] In 1819, however, Provencher decided against visiting this post, when he heard that it had been closed and that he would find no one there.

In 1821, when the HBC and NWC amalgamated, Bas de la Rivière lost its

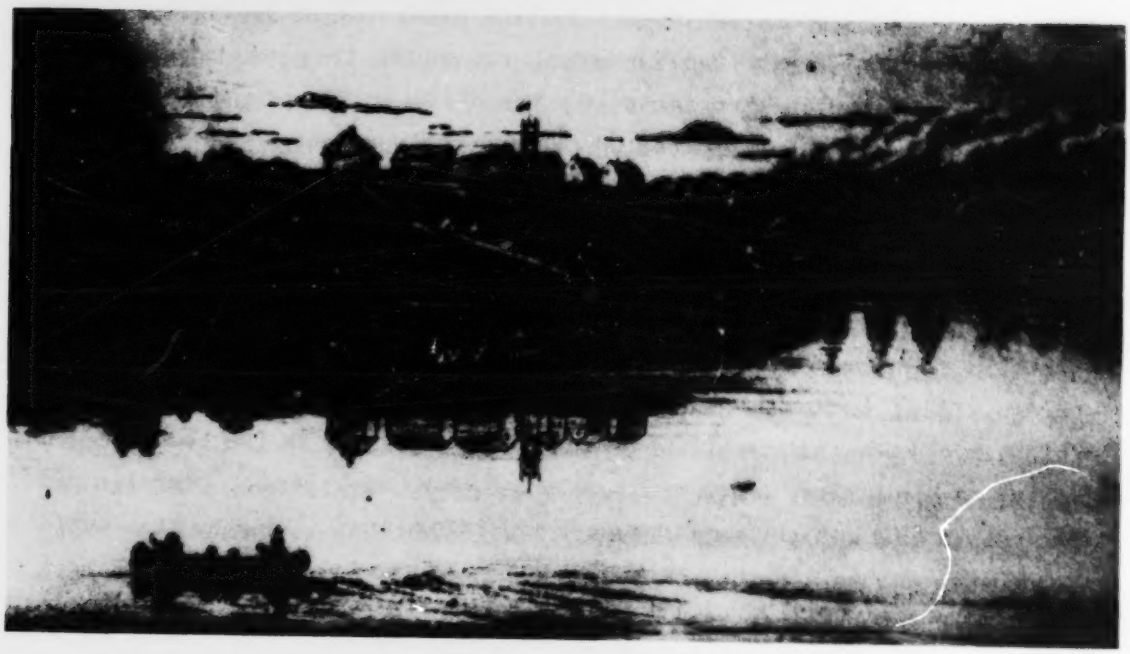


Fig. 40 Sketch of Fort Alexander, c. 1875

PAM

importance as a nexus on a major transport route. York Factory replaced Montreal as the main port of entry for trade goods and the Hayes River route became the main artery of the fur trade. Fort Alexander became a relatively unimportant post of the Lac la Pluie District. Because of this change of status within the fur trade economy, the post could not assume great importance as a centre of missionary effort. The population was not large enough to warrant a resident priest nor were there any more large gatherings of voyageurs to justify regular missionary expeditions. Passengers and some goods from Montreal continued to pass through Fort Alexander, however, and priests who travelled this route maintained a sporadic connection between the Church and the residents.

Fort Alexander was also close enough to Red River to be in frequent contact with the people of the colony. It was used by the settlers at Red River as the site for their fall fishery, especially in years such as 1825, when other sources of subsistence failed.[4] In December 1825, Mr. Dumoulin spent some weeks at the post ministering to John McDonald dit Le Borgne, Chief Factor of the post from 1823-36. A good friend of the Catholic mission, McDonald had become dangerously ill as the result of an injury to his finger, which eventually had to be amputated.[5] Dumoulin did not return to Red River until January 12, 1826. Such a lengthy stay would be unusual unless a number of people were gathered there to benefit from the services of the priest.

Fort Alexander was rarely mentioned by the priests en route to or from Quebec who passed through in the canoe brigades. Belcourt initiated a more intensive series of contacts from Red River, when he paid a brief visit to the post in the spring of 1838, while on his way to Rainy Lake. He performed several marriages and the rest of the duties of an itinerant Catholic priest. Because he did not have a canoe, he had little contact with the Sauteux,[6] which suggests that the Sauteux did not live in the immediate vicinity of the post. Little could be expected in the way of religious conversion from such brief visits.

Moreover, the Lac la Pluie District itself was an area where the American Fur Company competed with the HBC. As usually happened in these cases, a great deal of liquor was used to entice the Sauteux to trade

their furs. Such activities presented a considerable obstacle to conversion here, as in other missions.[7] Provencher hoped the prospects of these missions would improve, after the Council at Fort Garry in 1840 decreed an end to liquor traffic in the Lac la Pluie District. The immediate effect of this prohibition, however, was to anger the Sauteux, who blamed the missionaries for this ruling.[8]

Belcourt was more optimistic about Wabassimong (White Dog), at the junction of the Winnipeg and English Rivers, which was a gathering place for large numbers of Natives.[9] As a symbol of his intention to establish a mission there, Belcourt erected a cross in 1840 and began to build a permanent mission station, similar to Baie St. Paul. On his trips to Wabassimong, Belcourt also included a stay at Fort Alexander, but these were itinerant missions only and happened rarely. Fort Alexander was but one stop in a busy schedule, which included visits along the way to Wabassimong, and from there to Rainy Lake and Fort Frances.

When Belcourt passed through Fort Alexander in 1842, the post interpreter told him the head chief of the Sauteux, intending to accept the Catholic faith for his whole tribe, awaited him several miles farther up the Winnipeg River. Aware of the value such a conversion would have for his impact on the whole area, Belcourt hastened to meet the chief. Unfortunately, a white man from Lac la Pluie arrived with rum; the chief and his men changed their minds about conversion and decided instead to go to the fort for more rum.

According to Belcourt, the rumour that a minister would come and give them clothing if they allowed him to baptize them, also influenced their decision. If Belcourt offered the same advantages, they said they would join him. But the priest rejected this suggestion, and had to be content with baptizing three children.[10] This whole incident is presented only from the missionary's point of view, and is biased by his personal perception, by the contemporary high level of competition between Catholics and Anglicans, and by the fact that Belcourt was writing for publication in missionary periodicals, all of which influenced his judgment. Nonetheless, it provides a glimpse of some of the motivations and reactions of the Sauteux to Christianity and of their continued

independence in actions and decisions about conversion.

In 1843, Belcourt met the boats from Rainy Lake and Rat Portage at Fort Alexander. He had not seen the men of the boat brigade for any length of time in the previous four years and took advantage of this opportunity to hear confessions from thirty-three of them and to perform three baptisms and one marriage. At Mass in the morning, he gave instructions.[11] These brief and sporadic missions to boat brigades preserved a contact with the Métis and Indians who provided this seasonal and heavy labour. In some sense, then, these missions were comparable to the buffalo hunt missions of the Church, although neither as sustained nor so prolonged.

In 1846, Belcourt prepared to return to Quebec and the newly-arrived Oblate priests took over his missions. They found Wabassimong a hopeless prospect and abandoned it the following year. The buildings were sold to the Methodists. With this, the already infrequent missionary visits by Catholic priests to Fort Alexander declined even more.

In the early 1860s, when Taché had more priests at his disposal and was no longer responsible for the far northern missions, Catholic missionary activity in the St. Boniface Diocese experienced a general revival. Fort Alexander was one of these renewed missions. Père Jean Marie Lestanc went yearly to give a mission for a few days north of Lower Fort Garry on the Red River, near the Anglican mission of St. Peter's, where two or three Catholic Cree families also lived. The priest also baptized a few Sauteux at this mission. On his visit in 1861, he met some "Sauteux Métis " of Fort Alexander, who begged him to go and see them, if only to baptize their children.[12] When he returned to St. Boniface, Lestanc reported this to Taché and the Bishop agreed that he should go.

Lestanc arrived at Fort Alexander on January 9, 1862 and left twelve days later. Mr. McMurray, in charge of the post, received him warmly. Mr. Barnet, the Anglican school-master, visited the post at the same time and the two clergymen appeared relatively friendly to each other.[13] During his stay, Lestanc held services in the post carpenter's shop for the forty-five Catholics at the post, as well as a number of Indians. After his Sunday Mass, Lestanc baptized eleven children, ranging in age from a

few months to thirteen years; before his departure, he baptized another five, mostly adults.[14] In general, missionaries only baptized adults after some period of preparation, unless they were in imminent danger of death or were setting out on a long and hazardous journey. These adults had probably already been catechized to some extent by other missionary visits at Fort Alexander, or through their visits to the lower Red River or Rainy Lake when missionaries were present.

Much of Lestanc's influence in this mission was exerted on the Métis servants of the post. One of them, François Guimont, did a great deal to help Lestanc in his missionary work. His devotion led to the ironic reference to him in the post journal as the "R. Rd. Guimon",[15] when he used his own dogs with the HBC carriole to bring Lestanc back to Red River.

Lestanc estimated that there were about forty Catholic Sauteux Métis plus several well-disposed Sauteux at Fort Alexander; he was unsure of the total number of Sauteux who traded at the post. About ten of the Sauteux had previously become Catholics, after instruction by missionaries at Rat Portage and Rainy Lake. This reveals some continuity with the earlier itinerant missions of St. Boniface in the area. It also indicates the wide range of country still considered home to the Sauteux. Although they had as yet proved almost impervious to both Catholic and Protestant missionary efforts, Lestanc thought his chances had improved with the departure of the Methodists from the area. According to Lestanc, the Sauteux remembered Mr. Belcourt with fondness and, as a result, treated all priests with respect.[16] This seems proof that Belcourt's missions had been more successful than had earlier appeared to Provencher and the Oblates.

Stationed at Fort Alexander, a priest could contact people from the surrounding areas, by travelling on the supply boats which went to Rat Portage and Rainy Lake in early June. On his trips back and forth to St. Boniface, the priest would be able to visit the Indians on the lower reaches of the Red River. Finally, the priest would be able to minister to the large numbers of Red River residents who came to Fort Alexander to fish in the fall.[17] Thus, a mission at Fort Alexander would combine

sedentary and itinerant mission activities, to extend the services of the Church throughout a wide radius from a base at Fort Alexander itself.

The site offered good prospects for the subsistence of a missionary. Fish and wood were abundant and of good quality; the soil was dark and produced excellent barley and potatoes. Since Lestanc thought the wheat grown at Fort Alexander was inferior to that of Red River and inadequate as fodder for cattle, he suggested trading Fort Alexander fish for Red River meat in the fall.

Lestanc was anxious to proceed with this mission as quickly as possible. A major incentive to this establishment, as to so many others, was the rumour that a Protestant minister planned to go to Fort Alexander in 1862. In his report, Lestanc stated that a Protestant school, taught by Thomas Spence, had operated at the post for the previous four and a half years and had not succeeded in teaching even one child the alphabet. His replacement, Mr. Barnet, however, who arrived in September 1861, was acknowledged to be devoted to his task and liberal in his religious views.[18] In view of the current denominational rivalry to win the souls of the Natives, a good teacher like Mr. Barnet was much more to be feared than a poor one. His presence made it imperative that the Catholic Church renew its earlier mission outreach to Fort Alexander.

Lestanc returned to Fort Alexander on August 13, 1862 and remained twelve days. This was an ideal time for a mission, since it was the time when the people of Lac la Pluie and the other posts of the District spent about ten days at Fort Alexander, receiving their annual supplies. Many Sauteux also came to the fort at the same time to go to their fishing sites or to harvest wild rice.[19] On this visit Lestanc again used the carpenter's shop as a chapel and for his catechism classes.[20] As many as forty-three people attended his morning and evening services; during the afternoon, only the women and children were free to attend the instructions. The priest even received private donations from five individuals, who contributed five shillings apiece. Lestanc returned to the fort for a brief visit in December and said Mass in the Carpenter's Shop where a good many Sauteux were present.

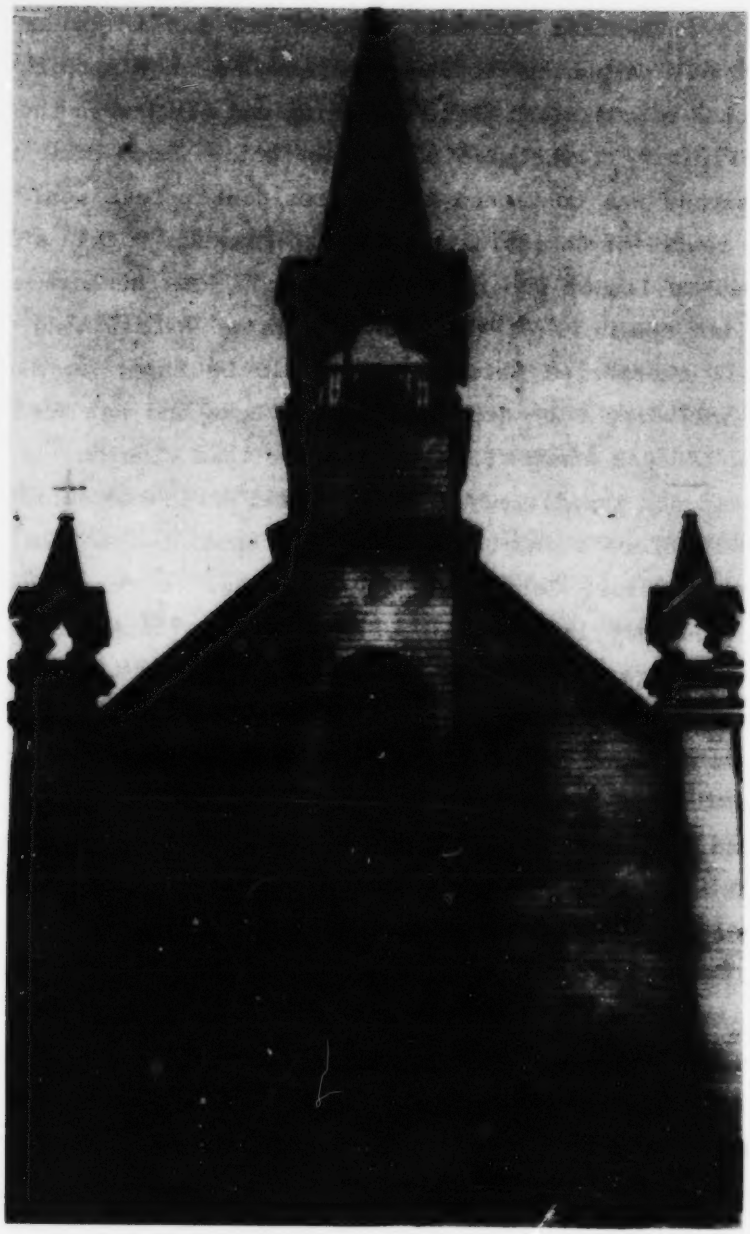


Fig. 41 Fort Alexander Church, n.d.
Archives Deschâtelets, Ottawa

Lestanc's enthusiasm for this mission led him to press Taché to establish it on a permanent footing. He reminded the Bishop that a number of people could be contacted there in spring and fall, when the boats left for Lac la Pluie. It was also a fishing centre which drew a number of people. Lestanc was convinced that a resident priest would develop a flourishing centre of Christianity at Fort Alexander within a short time, especially since liquor was no longer traded. Furthermore a priest at Fort Alexander could visit the old mission of Wabassimong, where the Indians still remembered Belcourt and would be happy to see a priest again. By including Fort Alexander, Rainy Lake and Rat Portage in his enumeration, Lestanc named 102 Catholics for this mission.[21]

Taché did not immediately accept Lestanc's recommendations. It was several years before a resident priest was appointed to Fort Alexander and, in the meantime, Fort Alexander continued to be served from St. Boniface. In January 1863, Père Laurent Simonet visited the mission but found that shortage of food had caused several people to leave for Red River. During the two weeks he spent at the fort, Simonet taught catechism two or three times a day and prepared the children and seven or eight adults for First Communion. Simonet also visited the Sauteux of the neighbourhood and shared Lestanc's opinion that the Sauteux admired Catholicism.[22]

In August and December of 1863, Lestanc again visited Fort Alexander. From this point until the late summer of 1868, the record of activity at Fort Alexander is sparse. A list of baptisms at the fort remains and makes it possible to fix the dates of some of the visits and to form a good idea of the course of missionary activity. Often the priests who came to Fort Alexander had set out from St. Laurent or from St. Charles, on an extensive missionary tour undertaken at a time when many of their parishioners were away for the hunt. A summer visit and one in December or January were the norm. Lestanc used his Christmas vacation from St. Boniface College to go to Fort Alexander.[23] This pattern, which fit into the yearly cycle of large gatherings at the fort, continued until 1868.

In April and May 1868 Lestanc visited the fort, while on a missionary tour which took him as far as Rainy Lake. The priest left St. Boniface

near the end of March and visited a number of Catholic families on the lower Red River, where he said Mass, heard confessions, and dealt with a family dispute.[24] Stops along the way were made at the home of Joseph Monkman, "la grosse roche", and the lodge of Courtepatte, 13 kms from Fort Alexander.

The priest reached Fort Alexander in the early morning of April third and spent his time teaching catechism and learning to speak Sauteux. Approximately twenty people attended his two daily services.[25] After a month, Lestanc left for Rainy Lake by canoe. On his return trip, he spent another few days at Fort Alexander, where he baptized five children and three adults. This was a well-established round of visits in connection with the Fort Alexander mission by this time.

After his discharge from St. Boniface College in 1868, Lestanc obtained permission from Taché to winter at Fort Alexander. The Bishop was able to spare him at that time because two Oblates - Tissot and Maisonneuve - had retired from the western missions and returned to St. Boniface, where they assumed some of Lestanc' former duties. When he arrived at Fort Alexander on August 16, 1868, Lestanc told the Catholics of the great favour Taché was showing them by allowing him to stay at Fort Alexander. In response, they agreed to contribute to his support.

He already had a house and some potatoes there, and would get fish and wild rice in the fall.[26] It is uncertain how the priest acquired this building; possibly it was donated to him by one of the fort personnel. It was a log building and required a good mudding, the method used to insulate log structures both outside and inside. The roof was covered with bark, the most commonly used material. Lestanc was confident that with a good caulking his home could be made quite warm, especially since the area provided abundant firewood. The door of his house and the ceilings were very low, which might be evidence that it was designed as a storehouse rather than a residence. The building had three windows but only two had glass in them; the third was probably covered with parchment in the interim, while waiting for a nine-paned window.[27] This small building served as rectory, chapel, schoolroom, and reception hall. It is not surprising that Lestanc hoped to build an addition to serve as a

chapel in the near future.

The furnishing of the house was not at all luxurious. By late September, Lestanc could boast of a chair made out of an old wine barrel carved to conform to his "hémisphères", a small table and a travelling stool loaned to him by Mr. Taylor, who was in charge of the post, and an oil lantern donated to him by an unnamed woman. Lestanc used two empty rifle-crates as altar and bookcase. In his kitchen he had a copper pail, a tin pot, and a knife with a fork and spoon. Ironically, the missionary seems to have profited from the residuals of the liquor traffic which was the bane of his work. He used a rum barrel as a cupboard, an old brandy keg to hold his lamp oil and a similar port container as his water tank. A sawed-off sherry keg served as a wash-basin. One major purchase was an iron stove. Although Lestanc lived in this "pauvre chaumière", he took his meals with his neighbours, the Guimont family.

Lestanc got along well with those in charge of the post and received some assistance from them. Mr. Taylor and Mr. Lillie asked him to dinner frequently; their wives gave him presents of tea, sugar, and flour. Still, Lestanc preferred his solitary fish and potatoes to their "poudings et leurs rôtis entourés de cérémonies".[28]

Lestanc's primary goal was to instruct the Métis servants of the fort more thoroughly and to attempt more contact with the Sauteux, "so near to civilization and so far from religion".[29] As the HBC faced renewed competition from free-traders, Lestanc found his efforts seriously affected by the sale of liquor to the Sauteux. He continued his study of the Sauteux language and gave instructions each day after Mass, but found it difficult to learn the language without dictionaries and grammars; Belcourt's writings proved inadequate to his purposes. Lestanc also wanted to find books that the Sauteux could use. He thought it essential to have an abridged syllabic catechism, with some prayers and hymns, for these Sauteux, whom the missionaries saw only in passing. "Sans livres, nous ne ferons rien".[30]

In November, Baptiste Courchène, his wife Abistan, and their daughter, came to the fort and asked Lestanc to go and say Mass in the Indian village, six or eight kilometres upriver from the fort. The priest

went gladly, hoping to be able to continue this practice, if he could persuade the fort people to take him halfway, and if the Sauteux would meet him there.[31] It appears that these were the "Sauteux Métis" to whom Lestanc had referred on his first visit, possibly former servants of the HBC, who had become freemen, or their descendants, who probably formed the nucleus of the later reserve.

Lestanc used his extended stay at Fort Alexander to begin a school for some of the children of the post. Only seven children were enroled in the fall; the priest hoped to teach them to read and to add more students after the fishing season. He began with three one-hour sessions each day and hoped later to use a quarter of an hour at each class for catechism. Within a month, the class had grown to twelve students, all of whom were making good progress. Lestanc invited Taché to visit his mission for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8th and increased his religious instruction in order to prepare more of the people for confirmation. By then, he had nineteen students; although somewhat irregular in attendance, five could read and about five were beginning to spell.[32]

On December 28, 1868, however, Lestanc left for St. Boniface, and only arrived back on February 25, 1869. That year, Fort Alexander experienced the same famine conditions which prevailed at Red River and Lestanc's first concern was to help the Guimont family who had looked after him so well. He stopped taking his meals at their home and gave them a good part of the flour and fresh meat which he had brought from St. Boniface. The priest expected to manage until spring with his remaining supplies - 100 fish provided him by the HBC, some flour, two small pieces of meat and 60 other whitefish. He hoped to use some of this as gifts to those in need.[33]

Because of the food shortage, fewer people resided at the fort and Lestanc's congregation was smaller in size. He began to visit the Indian village again, which raised the ire of the Anglican ministers. Henry Cochrane came to help the resident missionary, Mr. Phair, combat Lestanc's move into what they regarded as their preserve. The priest feared that their visits to all the houses, their "calumnies" against the Catholic

religion, their charities, and their medical help would win over the Sauteux, whom he regarded as more susceptible to this type of missionary endeavour than the Métis.[34] These were techniques used by all missionaries, including the "calumnies" against the opposing denomination. But Lestanc was less equipped to compete with these tactics and therefore blamed the Sauteux for responding to them.

As Vicar General of St. Boniface, Lestanc had to leave Fort Alexander to assume the supervision of the diocese, while Taché attended the Vatican Council in Rome in 1869. This affected the well-being of his mission at Fort Alexander and he feared the Protestants would be successful in countering his efforts. According to him, the Sauteux had begun to like him but were upset that he would not stay with them. Baptiste Courchene told him it would have been better if he had not come at all, until he was ready to establish a permanent mission.

Lestanc made one more missionary tour before leaving the mission, visiting Fort Frances on Rainy Lake in May 1869 and arriving back at Fort Alexander on July 16, 1869. He left four days later for St. Boniface, planning to return when the fall brigades would be at Fort Alexander. It seems unlikely that Lestanc actually made this visit, for the unrest at Red River required his presence in St. Boniface.

When the reserve at Fort Alexander was surveyed in 1873, no claim for the Catholic mission was recorded. Later, Lot Two was occupied by the Catholic mission. The total amount of land allotted to the Church was 24 hectares[35] near Lake Winnipeg, where the French and Catholic members of the band had congregated, whereas the English Protestants occupied the upper part along both sides of the river.[36]

Education

In 1875, the band numbered about 506 persons. The Catholics at that time had begun to build a school, although the Anglicans already had one which had been running for several years. This was a departure from custom, which usually allowed for only one denomination on each reserve. The Catholic school required government funding for its completion and the negotiations over this and over the salaries of two teachers for this one

Fig. 42 Fort Alexander
Church, Rectory, School
Deschatelets Archives

reserve with two schools dragged on for several years. Père Allard asked Prime Minister John A. Macdonald to intervene in the matter. The Catholic school-teacher, Mr. Jules Tabouret, had taught the school with an average attendance of thirty-five children, yet only received $150 from the government, rather than the $300 stipend for teachers in Indian schools. Macdonald replied that it was impossible to pay $300 to the Catholic school-teacher, since that was the total amount allotted to any reserve;[37] this amount had to be divided between the Anglicans and Catholics on the Fort Alexander Reserve.

In 1887 the school had an enrolment of forty-one children, while the total Catholic population of the reserve was estimated to be about 300, forming about half of the total number of people.[38] In the twentieth century, a large residential school dominated the Catholic mission site.

The pre-1870 history of the Catholic mission of Fort Alexander revolves almost entirely around the work and presence of Père Lestanc. After his departure in 1869, Fort Alexander was visited by Père Joachim Allard, the pastor at St. Charles, who made a missionary tour each summer to Peguis, Fort Alexander, Lake of the Woods, Rainy Lake and Lac Seul. In 1876, Père Allard was appointed resident priest of the now-permanent mission of St. Alexander.[39] At the end of the next year, Père Marcou arrived to assist Allard. The two priests looked after not only Fort Alexander itself but also the Winnipeg River, Lake of the Woods, Rainy Lake, Lac Seul, and the English River, all part of the Territory of Keewatin, outside of Manitoba. When the boundary between Ontario and Manitoba was decided, most of the mission outposts of Fort Alexander then fell within the limits of Ontario.

St. Alexander mission had one of the longest periods of itinerant missionary contact before it became a permanent mission station. From the time the Catholic priests first passed through in 1818 to the establishment of the permanent mission in 1876, the people of Fort Alexander were exposed to brief and sporadic appearances by various priests, interspersed with long periods of no contact at all. Yet the baptisms and instructions given in those short missions were sufficient to maintain a claim, no matter how tenuous, that the Roman Catholic Church had a number of

adherents at Fort Alexander, enough to justify the provision of a Catholic church and school on the reserve in the 1870s. These facilities sustained the Catholic population in their faith and supported the permanent status of the church of St. Alexander.

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Conclusion

The years 1818-1870 witnessed a vast expansion of the Roman Catholic Church, from its uncertain commencement at St. Boniface and Pembina in 1818, until it extended throughout much of Manitoba in 1870. When the Church received a generous grant of land at Red River from Lord Selkirk, Bishop Plessis of Quebec sent two priests to renew the presence of the Church in this faraway part of his huge diocese, an area where no priest had been for sixty years or more. They were sent to evangelize those Native peoples who had never heard the Gospel and at the same time to instruct and bring the Sacraments to the French-Canadians of the West. These two goals were combined in their missions to the Métis, descendants of French-Canadian and Indian forbears, who were the focus of most of the first missionary efforts of St. Boniface.

To reach all of these diverse peoples, the priests had to combine missionary tours with a settled residence. Like the Métis, the priests were neither entirely sedentary nor wholly itinerant. St. Boniface soon became a settled parish and the headquarters for the bishop. Outside of St. Boniface, however, settlement was sparse and seasonal gatherings for the buffalo hunt or for fishing were the norm. The clergy visited these scattered clusters of people for varying lengths of time, preached, instructed, baptized, married and buried. By pursuing this itinerant ministry, the priests could reach large numbers of people who had no contact with St. Boniface. The one sedentary Sauteux mission, Baie St. Paul, was an aberration from this norm. At St. François Xavier and on the buffalo hunt missions, the priests combined itineracy with more prolonged winter contact to form a sort of moveable parish. Initiated by Taché in 1846, Lac Caribou was part of the extension to the far northern missions undertaken by Provencher when he received the assistance of the Oblates to expand his mission endeavours.

Underlying the expansion of Catholic missions was the attempt to convert the Natives to Catholicism before the Anglicans or Methodists could attach them to "heresy". This was especially evident at Lac Caribou and at Lake Manitoba. Competition with the Anglicans also marked the hasty establishment of the mission of St. Charles in 1854 and the opening of a school at Fort Alexander.

Further tension derived from the need to cooperate with the HBC, the governing body of the mission region, which had a personnel differentiated from the priests by language, religion, and nationality. The ambivalence of this relationship surfaced in the considerable financial support given the Church by the HBC and the cordial personal interactions which occurred, yet often marred by suspicion and mutual mistrust.

The shortage of priests and the lack of adequate funds to establish these missions on a satisfactory scale were constant sore points for Bishops Provencher and Taché. Combined with the unwillingness of the Sauteux to convert to any brand of Christianity, this induced Provencher, in the late 1840s and early 1850s, to concentrate his Oblate clergy in the far north; only one of these missions - St. Pierre on Lac Caribou - was within the present boundaries of Manitoba. When the Sauteux missions resumed in the late 1850s, some remained primarily itinerant, but most were already in the process of becoming sedentary parishes serving a few outlying missions.

Although education was a vital tool of missionary enterprise, the bishops had great financial difficulties in providing schools, even after they secured the assistance of the Grey Nuns to staff them. Many of the first mission schools were begun by the priests on their brief visits to various areas and were itinerant rather than stable institutions. The real expansion of Catholic schools occurred in the period between 1870 and 1890, when the combination of increased settlement plus government financing facilitated the establishment of more schools. Many of these were based on the earlier mission schools.

Despite all the handicaps - the lack of funds, the insufficiency of clergy and nuns, and a poor and semi-nomadic population - the Church persevered and increased its missions and its adherents. From St.

François Xavier, Baie St. Paul, St. Laurent, St. Pierre on Lac Caribou, St. Vital, Ste. Anne des Chênes, St. Charles and Fort Alexander, the Métis, Cree, Sauteux, and Chipewyan were instructed, baptized, and integrated into the Church. At the same time, the services of the Church were provided for those who were already Catholic.

By the 1860s, many of the first itinerant missions to the Métis had already become settled parishes and, as new settlements formed, more parishes were founded. More secular clergy from Quebec arrived, ready to be curés rather than missionaries, and the population of some of the former missions was stable enough and willing enough to sustain the costs of a parish. Within a few years, the Church in southern Manitoba became predominantly parochial rather than mission, prepared for the waves of settlement which came after 1870 and the social changes which resulted. This increased stability was reflected in more solid structures, with frame rectories and stone churches to replace the early log chapel-houses.

The relationship with the Natives was also altered when reserve-based missions replaced the old itinerant and buffalo-hunt missions. The more prolonged and consistent contact enabled the priests to pursue evangelization more intensively.

After 1870 a new interaction with the federal government replaced the old fur-trade association with the HBC. This was especially evident in the sphere of education. Government funding of residential schools gave considerable control over Native children to the various denominations which operated them. Despite the good intentions of both Church and government, this was only too often a devastating experience for the children.

Increased numbers of adherents, of priests, brothers, nuns, buildings, and schools made possible this growth of missions and parishes and the geographical extension of the Church. Some of the statistics of this growth have been presented here. These figures cannot convey the vast amount of time, the enormous expenditure of energy, and the fervent conviction which motivated this attempt to evangelize all these nations, to include so many disparate peoples within the Roman Catholic Church.

Appendix A

Mgr. Taché: Comparative Table of Red River Missions
as of July 16th, 1818, 1853, and 1888
published in Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface
Vol. XIV No. 10 (May 1915), p. 135.

	1818		1853		1888	
Archbishop		.....		.....	1	....
Bishops		.....	1	.....	3	....
Secular priests	2		4	.....	25	....
Seminarians	1	.....		.....	7	....
Oblates: priests		.....	7	.....	84	....
scholastics		.....		.....	2	....
lay-brothers		.....	2	.....	52	....
Jesuits: priests		.....		.....	7	....
scholastics		.....		.....	6	....
brothers		.....		.....	4	....
Frères de Marie		.....		.....	4	....
Sisters of Charity		.....	13	.....	103	....
Tertiary aides		.....		.....	31	....
Sisters of Holy Names of Jesus and Mary		.....		.....	23	....
Faithful Companions of Jesus		.....		.....	32	....
Residences of missionaries		.....	5	.....	83	....
Convents		.....	2	.....	20	....
Churches or chapels		.....	6	.....	98	....
Classical college		.....	1	.....	1	....
Schools		.....	4	.....	107	....
Hospitals		.....		.....	3	....
Hospices		.....	1	.....	6	....
Stations visited (no buildings)	4	.....	30	.....	112	....
Establishments abandoned		.....	6	.....	8	...

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